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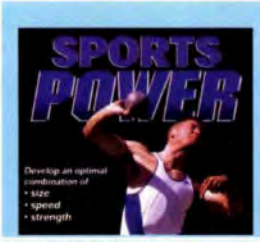

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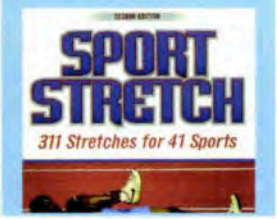

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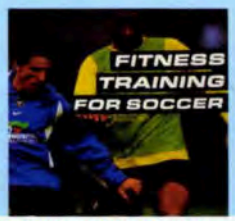

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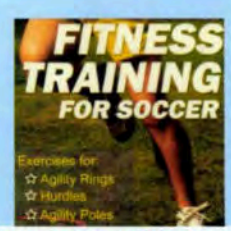

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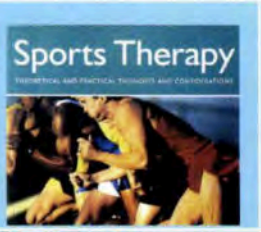

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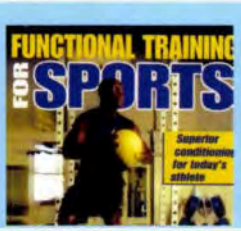

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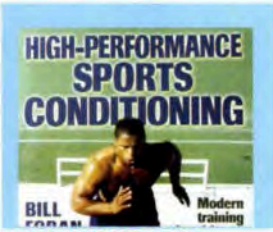

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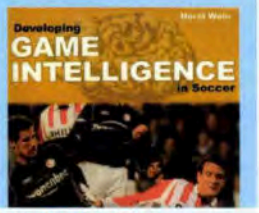

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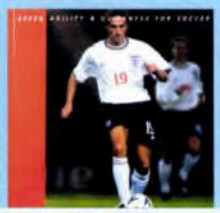

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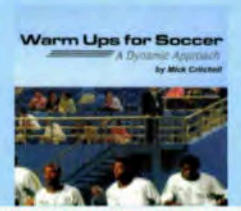

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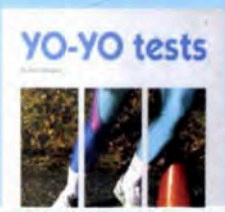

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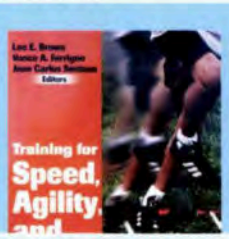

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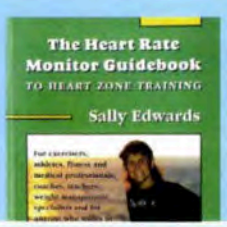

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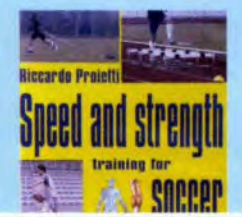

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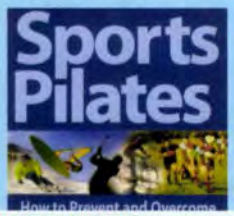

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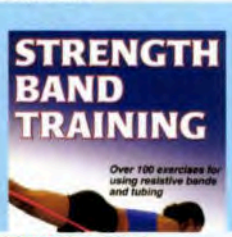

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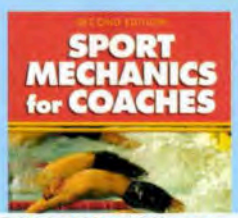

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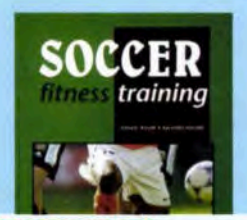

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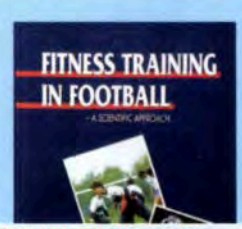

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JULY 2005

WORLD SOCCER comment

IF ANY PROOF were needed that football is now truly a global game, we got it this month with the strange case of Jon Obi Mikel. Two clubs, Chelsea and Manchester United, one owned by a Russian billionaire, the other now in the hands of an American billionaire, had a very public squabble over a Nigerian teenager who was registered with a Norwegian club but who had been spotted playing in international youth tournaments in Egypt and Finland. Simple game, football.

In many ways, the case of Mikel is more worrying for the future of the game than Malcolm Glazer's purchase of Manchester United. Of course, there are concerns that the Glazer family will burden United with unprecedented levels of debt, and that fans, as ever, will be made to pay. There have been claims that Glazer is going to turn Manchester United into a ruthless, profit-obsessed, money-making machine – unlike Manchester United plc, that well-known philanthropic, charitable venture. The projected figures for likely interest payments on United's new Glazer-inspired debts may make for alarming reading. But in the context of United's annual turnover, they do not amount to significantly more than the plc's shareholder dividends of recent years.

It may well be that the Glazers do not realise what a sophisticated marketing operation Manchester United already is, and so they may not be able to make the sort of extra profits they had originally planned. Then United could be in trouble. But until we know the exact nature of the Glazer blueprint for United, we cannot make any sort of predictions.

Much of the opposition to Glazer stems from pure xenophobia. Here is a strange-looking foreigner who has never set foot in Old Trafford, and may not do so at any time in the future. But Roman Abramovich did not know where Stamford Bridge was before his millions parachuted into Chelsea.

Abramovich is every inch the sophisticated European, not a slightly comical septuagenarian who boasts about how little his trousers cost. Hence the way Abramovich has been accepted by so many in England with so few questioning his motives. Yet while anger is directed towards Glazer, Abramovich continues to fund Chelsea's runaway success with droplets from his oil empire. The case of Mikel is disturbing because not only are Chelsea buying up the best established talent, but they are also now hoovering up the world's most promising youngsters – the sort of players smaller clubs used to develop and sell on just to survive.

FIFA regulations that were designed to prevent the transfer of under-18s may now be exacerbating the situation – allowing clubs like Chelsea a longer period of time in which to wave their chequebooks in the faces of teenagers like Mikel and their families. How can that be deemed progress?

Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com)

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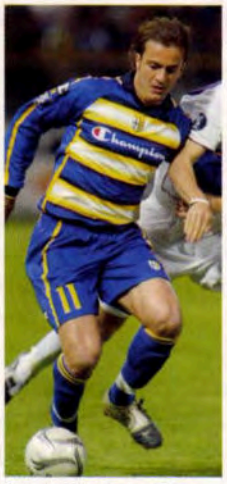
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PASSARELLA GETS THE PUSH
BRAZIL: Crisis-hit Corinthians sacked their Argentinian coach after a run of poor results. **Page 18**

AND THEN THERE WERE THREE
LIBERTADORES CUP: Going into the quarter-finals, only representatives from Argentina (Boca Juniors, River Plate, Banfield), Brazil (Santos, Sao Paulo, Atletico Paranaense) and Mexico (Guadalajara, Tigres) remained. **Page 64**

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

The full story from an amazing night in Istanbul. **Page 22**

MONEY WORRIES

ENGLAND: American billionaire Malcolm Glazer completed his takeover of Manchester United but in the process saddled the club with huge debts. **Page 53**

BAYERN AT THE DOUBLE

GERMANY: After a disappointing 2003-04, Bayern Munich roared back to form by winning League and Cup. **Page 55**

LE GUEN FLOATS AWAY

FRANCE: Gerard Houllier is the man tasked with delivering Lyon a record fifth consecutive League title following the resignation of Paul Le Guen. **Page 16**

FAVOURITES SUWON FAIL

ASIAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: South Korea's Suwon Bluewings joined Japanese duo Jubilo Iwata and Yokohama F Marinos as the big-name casualties of the group stage. **Page 70**

MOSCOW RULE

UEFA CUP FINAL: CSKA Moscow became the first Russian team to win a European club competition when beating Sporting Lisbon 3-1. **Page 30**

SIX MINUTES OF MADNESS

ITALY: Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti is under pressure after his team's dramatic collapse in Istanbul. **Page 14**

BETIS IN THE BIG TIME

SPAIN: The green half of Seville celebrated reaching the Champions League for the first time, while Sevilla fans were left rueing missed opportunities. **Page 12**

EAGLES SOAR AGAIN

PORTUGAL: Benfica ended their longest title drought – 11 years – when a 1-1 draw away to Boavista on the final day secured them the championship. **Page 56**

● 03/05/05

Over the line?...Liverpool's Luis Garcia scores the disputed winner in the Champions League semi-final clash with Chelsea

● 04/05/05

All in vain...Philip Cocu scores a late goal for PSV but it is not enough to prevent defeat on away goals to Milan

● 08/05/05

Crucial strike...David Trezeguet celebrates his goal as Juventus beat Milan 1-0 to take a decisive step towards the Serie A title

HEADLINERS

LIVERPOOL

Champions of Europe for a fifth time after a blockbuster Final in Istanbul

FOOTBALL...BLOODY HELL! Alex Ferguson will probably not enjoy his words being re-quoted in the wake of a European Cup triumph by one of his bitterest rivals. But how else to describe such an enthralling match as the 2005 Champions League Final in Istanbul?

After their astonishing comeback against Milan, Liverpool's victorious squad returned to rapturous scenes on the streets of Liverpool the following day. The people of a proud city, which has always lived through its football – for better and for worse – descended on St George's Hall in Liverpool city centre. The scale of the celebrations took police and the authorities by surprise.

Coach Rafa Benitez was happy to leave the stage to his players. He was already contemplating the major changes that he is likely to make to Liverpool's squad for next season.

"Steven Gerrard is a key player for us, along with Xabi Alonso, Luis Garcia, Fernando Morientes, Jamie Carragher and Sami Hyypia," said Benitez. "We've a lot of good players but we need to find more to improve the team."

Benitez was given a huge boost by captain Gerrard's post-match commitment to the club – "How could I leave after a night like this?" – and the manager will surely receive a hefty slice of the millions earned in TV and prize money from the Champions League to spend on new recruits.

Crowded out...celebrations outside St George's Hall in Liverpool

'The winner should have a chance to defend the title. We must sit down as a matter of real urgency to see if there is a fair way to make it happen'

UEFA president Lennart Johansson

Ironically, a number of the heroes of Istanbul will make way for new arrivals. Goalkeeper Jerzy Dudek and midfielder Vladimir Smicer are both out of contract and the Final was probably their last game for Liverpool.

Benitez's task in attracting new signings will be made all the easier if the club are playing in the Champions League next season. But despite a growing campaign for Liverpool to be included, there are doubts about whether the UEFA executive will agree a change in the tournament's regulations to allow a fifth English team to compete next season.

UEFA president Lennart Johansson appeared to back Liverpool's case when declaring: "The winner should have a chance to defend the title. We must sit down as a matter of real urgency to see if there is a fair way to make it happen." But the pragmatic Swede stopped short of proclaiming his support for finding space for a fifth team from England, alongside Chelsea, Arsenal, Manchester United and Everton, the top four finishers in the Premier League.

And Johansson's swipe at the Football Association – "What the hell is happening in England right now? It seems the Premier League is taking over everything" – suggested he was not entirely comfortable with the idea of having five English teams in the competition.

Privately, UEFA officials are still insisting that many executive members do not want to see more than four teams from a single country competing in the Champions League.

However, only Joseph Mifsud of Malta has publicly declared his opposition to Liverpool being admitted to next season's competition. "As the rules stand at present at UEFA we cannot do anything," he said. "Unless of course the regulations are changed. But I don't agree they can be changed midway through the season."

The executive committee meets on June 17, in Manchester. By then it will have become clearer whether Johansson has used his diplomatic skills to ensure an acceptable solution.

Gavin Hamilton

● 12/05/05

Fiery protests...Manchester United fans burn season ticket forms outside Old Trafford after hearing news of Malcolm Glazer's purchase of the club

● 15/05/05

Sun, sea, soccer...FIFA's Beach World Cup reaches its climax in Rio de Janeiro with France beating Portugal in the Final

THE GLAZER FAMILY

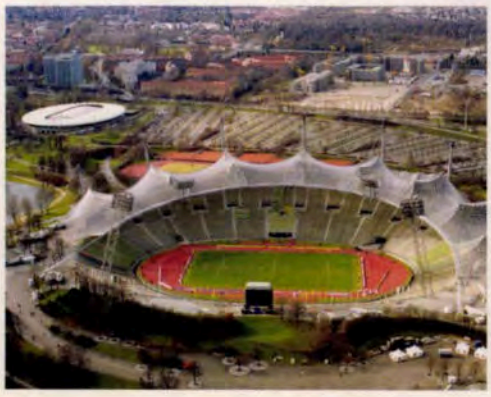
Meet Malcolm (second from right) and his sons Joel (far left) and Bryan – the new owners of Manchester United, pictured here with the coach of their gridiron side Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Jon Gruden (right).

Joel, 38, a self-proclaimed United fan, is expected to run the club on a day-to-day basis on behalf of his 76-year-old father, having been the driving force behind the family's purchase. The timing of the deal, just after United's last home game of the season at Old Trafford, took many people by surprise, but it succeeded in reducing the scope for fan protests.

DIEGO FORLAN & THIERRY HENRY

For the first time since the award was re-launched in 1996, the ESM Golden Shoe for 2005 will be shared by two players after Diego Forlan and Thierry Henry both finished the season on 25 League goals.

Arsenal's Henry thus retains the award he won last year, while Forlan is rewarded for an outstanding season with Villarreal. *See World Service for full results.*



MUNICH'S OLYMPIASTADION

The venue for the 1974 World Cup Final hosted its final football match on May 14 when Bayern Munich beat Nurnberg 6-2.

Next season Bayern and city rivals 1860 will play at the newly-opened Allianz Arena, the sparkling new high-tech stadium built for the 2006 World Cup. The Olympiastadion, meanwhile, will continue to host athletics events and concerts, while the new Pope may also visit next year.

Numbers game

£790MILLION...

Total cost of the Glazer family's acquisition of Manchester United plc.

£540MILLION...

Total amount of loans and credit taken out by the Glazer family to buy Manchester United.

£275MILLION...

Amount borrowed by the Glazer family from three secretive hedge funds.

£265MILLION...

Amount borrowed by the Glazer family from banks and secured against Manchester United's assets.

£126,000...

The amount owed in interest on a daily basis as a result of the above debts.

£100MILLION...

The total debts run up by Borussia Dortmund before a restructuring deal saved them from bankruptcy earlier this year.

77,000...

Average attendance at Dortmund's Westfalenstadion.

67,900...

Capacity of Old Trafford.

● 18/05/05

Flower power...Chelsea arrive in South Korea for a post-season friendly tour

● 18/05/05

The Russians are winning...CSKA Moscow players lift the UEFA Cup after beating Sporting Lisbon 3-1 at their opponents' own stadium

● 21/05/05

No way through...Man United can't beat a resolute Arsenal defence in the FA Cup Final. The Gunners win on penalties

WS WORLD SOCCER Brian Glanville

...on why UEFA should let Liverpool defend their European title...Moyes' manager award after 7-0 thrashing...a Heysel faux pas...and why Bergkamp should never be up front alone

Early exit...injured Harry Kewell gives way to Vladimir Smicer

BY THE TIME you read this, one imagines UEFA and the egregious Monsieur Gaillard will have come to their limited senses and allowed Liverpool, the new holders of the so-called Champions Cup, to defend their trophy next season. So-called, because anything like the Trade Descriptions Act would impugn the tournament as a manifest fraud.

Champions? When some countries, England included, are allowed to enter four contestants? If champions alone had been admitted, Liverpool themselves would plainly have been excluded.

As for Liverpool's admittance next season, we know there is a notable precedent. When Real Madrid had won the 2000 European Cup and finished only fifth in the domestic League, the Spanish federation simply and autocratically ruled out their fourth-placed Liga club, Zaragoza, and gave the place to Real.

The English FA, cognisant that the fourth-placed club this time round are Everton, Liverpool's eternal city rivals, would hardly dare do that. If it were to, you can well imagine the outrage of Everton, who should have competed in the 1985-86 European Cup only to be barred from doing so as a result of the Liverpool hooligans' stampede on the crumbling terraces of Heysel in the 1985 Final.

As for this year's Final, yes, folks, it was a game of two halves indeed, although Alan Hansen was surely exaggerating when he marvelled at the way Liverpool recovered those three goals against a defence made up of Cafu, Alessandro Nesta, Paolo Maldini and Jaap Stam. Surely the whole lesson of the semi-final second leg in Eindhoven, where PSV prevailed 3-1 and

'The much-criticised Rafael Benitez was absolutely right to gamble on starting with Harry Kewell, the only genuine winger he had'

● 21/05/05

Photo opportunity...the CSKA Moscow squad enjoy an audience with Russian President Vladimir Putin

● 25/05/05

Champions of Europe...Liverpool's captain Steven Gerrard and manager Rafael Benitez show off the trophy after their remarkable victory over Milan

● 28/05/05

Double top...German champions Bayern Munich celebrate beating Schalke in the Cup Final

'What in the name of logic possessed Wenger to stick poor, put-upon, paceless Dennis Bergkamp on his own up front?'

were so unlucky not to get through, was that Milan's supposedly iron defence of veterans could be run off its feet by rapid wingers – South Korean Park Ji-sung on the right, flying Peruvian Jefferson Farfan on the left.

This was why I felt that the much-criticised Rafael Benitez was absolutely right to gamble on starting with Harry Kewell, the only genuine winger he had. True, the gamble didn't work, Kewell breaking down in no time at all, but surely far more important in explaining Liverpool's defensive debacle in the first half was that no one was looking after Kaka. The young Brazilian had the freedom of the park, the freedom to run at and through the defence and set up his strikers to converge on goal. This was where it was quite legitimate to impugn Benitez.

But in the second half, with Dietmar Hamann shoring up the midfield and the dynamic Steven Gerrard enabled to go forward, it was another game, another scenario. Milan's defence was now exposed for what it is: an ageing bluff.

After all, the team's recent results in Serie A, where the title was lost to a far from impressive Juventus team – themselves resourcefully beaten by Liverpool – told their own story.

Andrii Shevchenko might well have won the Final for Milan, with his inspired passing in the first half, his double miss in extra-time, his further miss from the penalty spot during the shoot-out, but what a farce that would have been if it had happened. As we know, he should certainly have been sent off, and even if not sent off, then suspended, after blatantly butting Marco Materazzi of Inter in the quarter-final first leg.

That UEFA, in its typical limp ineptitude, let him off on the grounds that the nearby linesman hadn't reported it, beggared belief. No one seems to have asked the relevant question: why doesn't UEFA do what our own, much-maligned FA does, and give television footage to the relevant disciplinary committee?

Still, for those of us who have been barking our shins on UEFA since the Lobo-Solti case over 20 years ago, I suppose this should come as no surprise. Funny, though, how certain Italian clubs tend to get away with it.

I WONDER what Everton fans thought of their team's abysmal recent showing at Highbury, where they were thrashed 7-0. Hard on the heels of this debacle, their manager, David Moyes, was crowned as the best of the season in the Premier League.

It reminds me of the honour conferred on Germany goalkeeper Oliver Kahn at the 2002 World Cup. Voted the best in a poll taken just before the Final, he proceeded to give away a fiasco of a goal against Brazil as his side lost 2-0.

Everton's League form during the season has been somewhat inconsistent – hardly culpable when they lost first Wayne Rooney, then Thomas Gravesen – but they were always notably combative, at least until Highbury.

The team that surrendered to the Gunners was frankly no more than a flaccid disgrace. They simply looked quite unfit. Yes, I've heard explanations but won't flaunt the laws of libel. Arsenal, made to look irresistible, were wholly innocent parties.

TELEVISION news programmes, no respecters of sport, tend to give such jobs to burbling young ladies with no obvious competence or knowledge. Politically correct, I suppose. Nevertheless, burbling Sue Turton of *Channel 4 News* surely plumbed new depths when mindlessly and irrelevantly commentating on the victory parade by Liverpool the Thursday after the European Cup Final, when she said that what happened at Heysel would now be forgotten. This, in the very week when television showed its second documentary about the 1985 disaster.

Heysel, I suggest, will never be forgotten, hardly in Liverpool and never in Turin or Italy at large, least of all by the families of the 39 dead fans, most of them Italian, who suffered such bereavement.

WHAT of the FA Cup Final in Cardiff? And what in the name of logic possessed Arsene Wenger to stick poor, put-upon, paceless Dennis Bergkamp on his own up front against Manchester United?

Yes, we know Thierry Henry was absent and that Wenger, his team having twice been turned over in the League by United, erred on the side of caution, but this was ridiculous.

Bergkamp's is a glorious talent, made up of flair, skill and a lightning fast football brain. But these are talents he must exercise from what the Italians call a three-quarter position, just behind the front man, where he can and will do good by stealth. Put him up on his own and you not only lose what he can so subtly do but also what a younger, quicker striker – Robin Van Persie – could do in the role.

Still, Arsenal got away with it. Somehow.

Fast brain, slow legs...Bergkamp is caught by Roy Keane

Read Brian Glanville's weekly column at www.worldsoccer.com

● 28/05/05

Goodbye to all that...manager Martin O'Neill bids farewell to Celtic fans after the Scottish Cup Final win over Dundee United

● 28/05/05

Dream debut...Kieran Richardson scores the second of his two goals in his first England game, a 2-1 win against the United States in Chicago

● 29/05/05

Everyone's a winner...Mallorca stay up, Betis reach the Champions League, after a 1-1 draw

The lowdown on...

Trabzonspor

What's all the fuss about?
Istanbul Big Three Galatasaray, Fenerbahce and Besiktas have, for the most part, had things their own way in the Turkish League. So when provincial upstarts like Trabzonspor gatecrash the party by finishing runners-up in each of the past two seasons, it has to make headlines. Known as the Black Sea Storm, Trabzonspor have conclusively shown that a club can go far with an excellent youth set-up and a nose for bargain foreigners. Beaten by Kyiv Dynamo in the third qualifying round of the Champions League last year, the Storm will be looking to do better in August.

What's their history?
Trabzonspor Kulubu do not go back far, founded only in 1967 when the Turkish federation insisted local sides Idmangucu and Idmanocagi join forces to create a competitive counterpoint to the capital elite. Won promotion to the top flight for the first time in 1974 and soon embarked on a wonderful eight-year spell (1976-84), during which they won six League titles (1976, 1977, 1979, 1980, 1981 and 1984) and three national Cups (1977, 1978, 1984). Indeed, they are the only non-Istanbul club to have won the Turkish title.

Who's their powerbroker?
Businessman Atay Aktug took over from long-serving Ozkan Sumer two years ago. In common with most Turkish club chairmen, he is not one to keep a low profile. At times fiery, always opinionated. If he could not joust with League officials, you wonder what he would do with his life.

Don't mention...
...the accusations of sexual harassment levelled at young midfielder Ibrahim Ege by a female employee at a German hotel during a pre-season training camp. Ibrahim protested his innocence but Aktug swore he would never play for the club again. By October, though, Ibrahim was back in the squad.

Real handful...Fatih Tekke attempts to escape Besiktas' Mustafa Dogan

Who picks the team?
Following the sacking of coach Ziya Dogan last December, Trabzonspor turned to one of their favourite sons, former Turkey boss Senol Gunes. An outstanding goalkeeper during their glory years in the late 1970s and early 80s, Gunes twice steered the club to the runners-up spot in the League in the mid-1990s during a previous spell in charge. The Turkish press loved lambasting Gunes during his time in charge of the national team, conveniently overlooking his achievements: qualifying Turkey for the World Cup finals for the first time in nearly half a century, then leading them to third place.

What's the Gunes philosophy?
In the past he has been known as a fundamentally cautious coach, whose emphasis is on organisation, discipline and counter-attack. But in Trabzon this season, he has loosened up a little and his team seems much more prepared to force the issue. Uses either a 4-4-2 or a 4-3-2-1.

Who are the main men?
Trabzonspor certainly would not be where they are today without the serial goalscoring of Fatih Tekke, the Turkish League's top marksman this season with 31. But will they be able to hold on to him? He dovetails perfectly with the skilful Gokdeniz Karadeniz up front, while forceful Guinean midfielder Ibrahima Yattara provides plenty of support. The solid form of central defenders Tolga Seyhan and Erdinc Yavuz – who was recently called up for the first time by Turkey – kept the back door bolted, while Polish midfielder Miroslaw Szymkowiak, bought in January from Wisla Krakow, has supplied industry and a decent helping of goals.

What's their stadium like?
Built in 1951, the 21,000-capacity Huseyin Avni Aker is rather unassuming, featuring two simple main stands and open ends behind the goals. But hemmed in by hills and apartment blocks, it does generate plenty of noise and atmosphere, though the passion has sometimes spilled over into violence.

● 29/05/05

Happy days...Udinese captain Valerio Bertotto celebrates his team's Champions League qualification

● 31/05/05

Light fantastic...Allianz Arena, Munich's 2006 World Cup venue, opens with a spectacular ceremony before Bayern beat a Germany XI 4-2

GOOD MONTH FOR...

Back in the fold...Mutu

Betis, Everton, Trabzonspor, Udinese....all qualified for the Champions League for the first time.

Istanbul taxi drivers...at least someone benefited from UEFA's decision to stage a Champions League Final at an out-of-town stadium with no public transport links.

Teams wearing red...scientists at Durham University unveiled research that claimed teams with red kits are more intimidating and thus win more trophies. So how did Greece win Euro 2004?

Adrian Mutu... recalled by Romania after his worldwide ban for drugs use ended on May 25.

BAD MONTH FOR...

Roger Geutjes...the assistant referee at the Dutch League match between Utrecht and Den Bosch who was attacked by a police dog on the touchline. "I asked the dog handler to take him and sit a bit further away," said Geutjes, "but I guess the officer had not heard me. The first time I started to sprint the animal went straight for my shorts."

Ronaldo...left out of Brazil's squad to face Paraguay and Argentina in World Cup qualifiers after declining to make himself available for the Confederations Cup.

Javier Irureta...whose departure from Deportivo La Coruna meant only four Spanish Liga teams now have the same coach who began 2004-05.

Kaizer Chiefs...the South African club were banned from African club competitions for three years after withdrawing from the African Confederation Cup. They had been handed a place as one of the eight losers from the African Champions League second round.

Now what have I done?...Ronaldo

Notes & quotes

"The Champions Cup can be lost. But not like that."
Italian paper *La Repubblica* bemoans Milan's un-Italian defending in Istanbul.

"It's obvious that with time, Diego Maradona will one day be our first-team coach."
Boca Juniors president Maurizio Macri looks into his crystal ball after offering Maradona the job of director of the club's amateur section.

Starting at the bottom...Maradona

"I wasn't being supported. Trust in me had gone."
Ruud Gullit quits as Feyenoord coach.

"By Christmas at the very latest, Jurgen Klinsmann has to move back permanently to Germany."
Bayern Munich general manager Uli Hoeness insists it is impractical for the national coach to continue living in California and commute to Germany twice a month.

"Those who come out with such statements do so without any knowledge of how I go about my job."
Klinsmann replies brusquely.

"Football's like that. You never know what tomorrow will bring."
Portuguese midfielder Maniche takes a philosophical view of his surprise £11million transfer to Dinamo Moscow from FC Porto.

Betis hit the big time

The green half of Seville celebrates its first Champions League spot

SID LOWE in Madrid

AS THE CURTAIN FELL on the 2004-05 season, thousands of Real Betis fans decked in green and white flooded into Seville's Plaza Nueva, singing and dancing. Mopeds raced round and round dangerously overloaded, horns toot-tooting, flags waving off the back.

They were still circling, the party still jumping, when Betis's players, bare-chested, scarves tied round their heads, joined them in the early hours of the morning, straight off their flight from Palma de Mallorca, where they had secured a Champions League place.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the city, another carefully constructed series of crash-barriers, another party venue, this time red and white, was redundant, completely empty. You almost expected to see the tumbleweed whistle and bounce its way through. As they had done at Plaza Nueva, the city council had prepared for a massive celebration, this time of Sevilla fans. Instead, those supporters had slinked off home devastated; a sole Betis fan took their place, strolling through gloating.

The night could not have been any more perfect for Betis. In a season in which Barcelona maintained a comfortable lead throughout and had the League title wrapped up with three weeks to spare, in which Albacete and Numancia were dead and buried almost from the start, it was Seville that provided the most excitement and tension. Sevilla and Betis, the bitterest and most vociferous of city rivals, were neck and neck for a historic Champions League

Fourth as good as first... Betis players dance with joy after claiming the final Champions League spot

place – the first ever achieved by a team from Andalucia.

As the Sevilla president Jose Maria Del Nido had put it a month from the end of the season: "It would be wonderful if a team from Andalucia, especially one from Seville, could get a Champions League place. It would be truly historic; no club from here has ever done that before, let's not forget."

Yet Seville is no city of brotherly love, Del Nido far from magnanimous – he declared himself "the most important man in Seville, except the Pope", after all. And this most certainly was not a call for city pride. Rather, it was based on what appeared to be the fairly safe assumption that Sevilla would get the spot: they had led their neighbours virtually all season and went into the city derby, a match they hadn't lost in 10 years, with a six-point lead.

Final-day decider

Indeed, even after they had been defeated 1-0 through an early Ricardo Oliveira goal, Sevilla led the chase for a Champions League place by three points with four games to go. And yet, by the final day, either side could have claimed it, with Betis travelling to relegation-threatened Mallorca a point clear of Sevilla, who faced Malaga at home. In the event, a wonderful free-kick from Marcos Assuncao gave Betis a 1-1 draw, while Sevilla lost 2-0 despite having chance after chance after chance. They had also failed to score the previous week, held to a 0-0 draw at nothing-to-play-for Getafe, surprise survivors in their first season in the top division.

Having held a Champions League slot for much of the campaign, Sevilla picked up just two points in their final four matches. They still finished in a UEFA Cup place alongside the season's revelation – Espanyol, last year's final-day survivors, who are led by the wily Miguel-Angel Lotina – but that was little consolation, despite being a success for a club with only the 10th biggest budget in Spain.

"Getting into Europe again is the business, really," sighed coach Joaquin Caparros, "but it's hard to swallow."

It was harder still to swallow because of their rivals' gloating and partying across the city, of course. "I'm so pleased that Mr Benavente said it would be historic and wonderful for a team from Seville to get into the Champions League for the first time ever," said Betis president Manuel Ruiz de Lopera, studiously using Del Nido's second surname in yet another calculated snub. "He's right. It is historic. And ever since he said that, we've made a special effort to make it come true."

And come true it did, in swashbuckling, slick counter-attacking style. Betis outscored all but the three teams above them and could boast the League's joint top assist provider, Joaquin, and its third top goalscorer, Ricardo Oliveira, on 22. How Valencia must rue letting Ricardo go so easily; how Betis's fans chanted for Joaquin to stay – and Lopera, ever the populist demagogue, hinted that he might keep hold of him as the party hit full swing. Seville was green and white; Betis were in the Champions League.

Betis were not the only ones celebrating, of course. Indeed, the first leg of their party was held alongside fans of Mallorca at Son Moix. The draw meant Mallorca had survived despite having spent 31 weeks in the bottom three, despite having lain 11 points from safety with seven games remaining. They managed it by putting together an incredible run of four victories and three draws in their final seven games. Until then they had won only six all season.

Mallorca's survival came at the expense of Levante, who had taken 40 years to return to the First Division and just one to go back down again.

Obliterated by in-fighting – one player admitted that the squad and president Pedro Villarroel "almost came to blows" – Levante collapsed spectacularly. Having been in the Champions League places two months into the season, they plummeted after Christmas and collected just three points from their final 10 games. They plunged below Mallorca and into the Second Division after losing 4-1 on the final day to the season's other big winners, Villarreal and striker Diego Forlan.

Now there's a real success story. Forlan's five goals in the final two games – a superb hat-trick at Camp Nou in a 3-3 draw and two against Levante – meant he rose above Barca's Samuel Eto'o to claim the League top scorer award. His tally of 25 goals also put him level top with Arsenal's Thierry Henry in the ESM Golden Shoe table.

But if that comes as a shock to Manchester United fans, it is less of a surprise when you see the team that Forlan has behind him. Led by the wonderful, slow craft of Juan Roman Riquelme, Villarreal have, alongside Barcelona, consistently played the best, most fluid football in Spain this season and deservedly secured third place.

Which is quite a feat for a small club in a city with only 40,000 inhabitants and a single hotel. It may now be time to build another one; after all, Europe's biggest teams could well be on their way.

Outburst...Eto'o takes the mike

● Samuel Eto'o and his big mouth struck again at Barcelona's championship-winning party. Clutching the microphone before 100,000 people plus the entire country's media, Eto'o shouted, six times: "*Madrid, cabron, saluda al campeon!*" ("Madrid, you arseholes, bow before the champions!"). The next day, Eto'o was forced to issue a grovelling apology. "I never wanted to show any lack of respect to anyone. What happened was that in a moment of joy I started to sing, and that was all."

'Getting into Europe again is the business, really. But it's hard to swallow'

A UEFA Cup place is little consolation for Sevilla coach Joaquin Caparros

Six minutes of

Coach Ancelotti comes under pressure after Milan's dramatic collapse in Istanbul

PADDY AGNEW in Rome

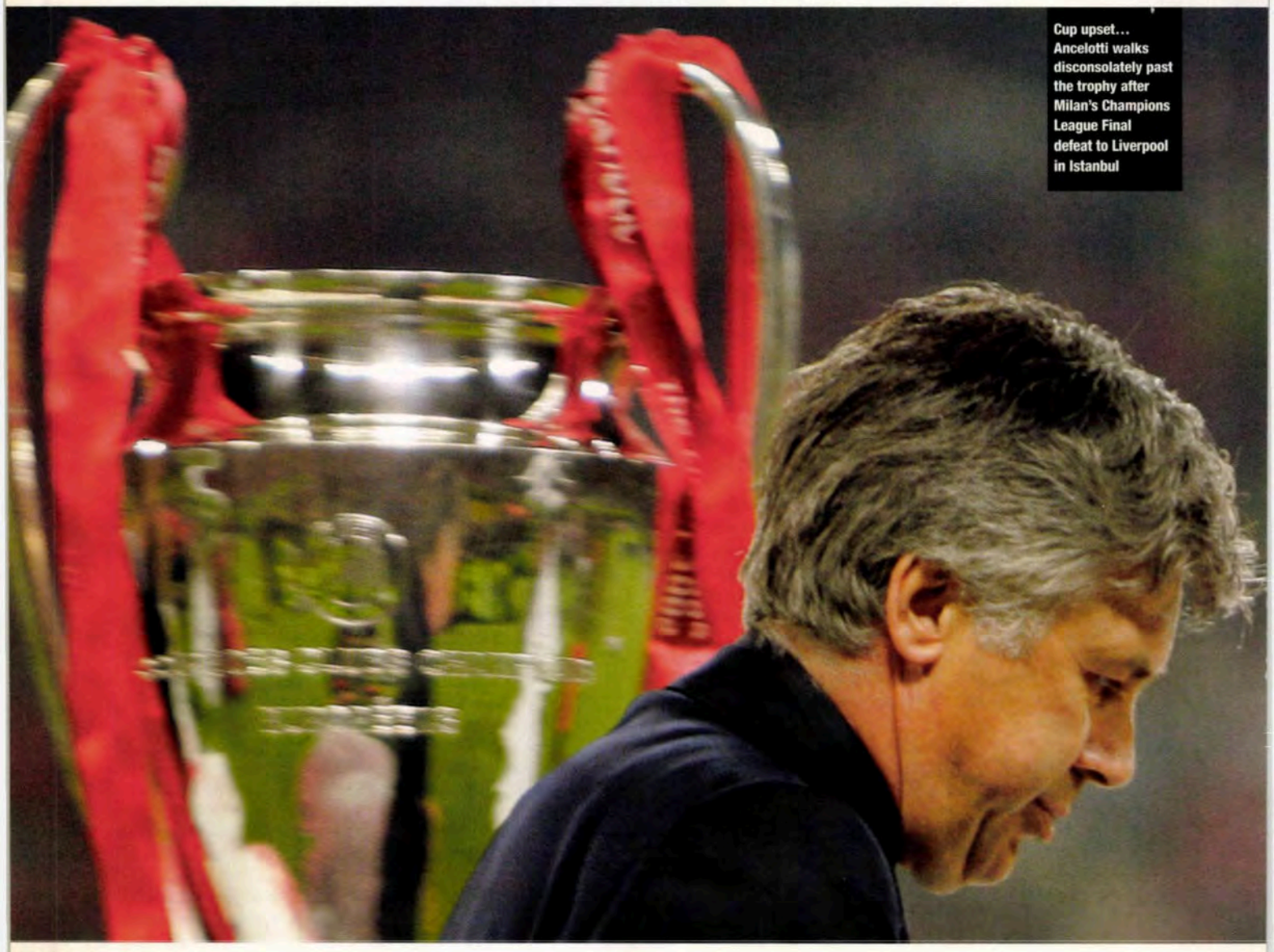
ALL ROADS LEAD to Istanbul. All reflections on the Serie A season just finished inevitably have to begin in Istanbul, where Milan's remarkable second-half collapse in the Champions League Final against Liverpool rounded off a miserable month, during which they had also lost the Italian championship to eternal rivals Juventus.

For Italian media commentators, there was little doubt about the Champions League Final – Milan lost it rather than Liverpool winning it. "Mad Milan Make a Present of the Cup to Liverpool," read the front-page headline of *La Repubblica*; *Il Messaggero* struck a similar note, heading their match report with "Milan Commit Suicide"; *Gazzetta Dello Sport* carried the front-page banner headline "Milan In A Nightmare"; and *Corriere Dello Sport* went with "A Milan That Would Make You Cry".

While many critics were full of praise for Liverpool's valiant fightback, nearly all argued that Milan had only themselves to blame for losing a game they had seemed certain to win.

"A side that scores three goals in the first 45 minutes, which outclasses its opponents, knocking them stupid with fabulous football, that same side simply cannot concede three goals in six minutes," was *Gazzetta's* comment. *Corriere* also stuck the boot in: "Milan went missing, just as they had done against La Coruna last season…and against PSV in the semi-final second leg, when they thought they only had to defend their comfortable advantage… You can always lose a Champions League Final, but not this way, throwing away a three-goal lead."

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti was the object of much criticism,



Cup upset… Ancelotti walks disconsolately past the trophy after Milan's Champions League Final defeat to Liverpool in Istanbul

madness

but gave a level-headed response, befitting one of the more laid-back figures in Italian football. "We've had a great season even if we didn't win anything," he said four days after the Final. "You'd have to say that we lacked that last little bit that makes the difference. We're off on our holidays now but when we get back into training on July 14, we'll be looking to bridge that gap for next season. In my opinion, the team gave its all, right down to the last game, and you simply cannot point a finger at them for anything. We didn't get what we deserved, especially in the Champions League Final, especially given what we had produced on the pitch. But that's football and you have to live with that...We made some mistakes in Istanbul but we paid a heavy price for them."

As for his failure to ring the changes when his side were under the cosh from Liverpool, Ancelotti was defensive, commenting: "There simply was no time to effect any changes or try to set things to rights. I have also heard people saying that maybe I should have rung the changes when we were winning 3-0. But I say that you'd have to be mad to start changing a side that, until then, had played probably our best football of the entire season."

Staying on

Ancelotti, who admitted having been contacted by Roma, added that despite Milan's failure to achieve either of their seasonal objectives (the Serie A title and the Champions League), he had no intention of leaving the club. The coach was certainly aware that even within minutes of the Istanbul debacle, owner Silvio Berlusconi had given him a vote of confidence. "We lost out to six minutes of total madness," the Prime Minister told reporters. "We dominated, we were never in difficulty. But I have no complaints about Ancelotti, why should I have? He's a terrific coach, and if you don't mind, I'm going to hold on to him. Nor have I any complaints about my players."

Despite this, questions remain. For a start, Milan quite clearly experienced a radical loss of form in the last month of the season, effectively losing the title after a 1-0 defeat by Juventus at San Siro just four days after they had scraped into the Istanbul Final after a bruising 3-1 defeat by PSV.

Ancelotti must explain just how he managed to lose both the *scudetto* and the Champions League to two sides that were not only technically inferior but also had smaller, less talented squads. The coach, acting president Adriano Galliani and all the senior staff at Milan will have to ask themselves if there is a thread that connects the 4-0 rout by Deportivo La Coruna last season, which overturned Milan's 4-1 first leg lead and cost them a place in the Champions League semi-finals, to the defeats by PSV and Liverpool, when they again held the whip hand. Did Ancelotti and his players suffer from over-confidence on all three occasions?

It could be, too, that the coach is somewhat hamstrung by Berlusconi's insistence that Milan should not only win but do so in style. In other words, even if he had been tempted to shut up shop at half-time in Istanbul and bring on an extra, defensive midfielder to cope with Dietmar Hamann, he would have been very reluctant to do so because of the owner's likely reaction.

While Milan pause to ponder, the 'Old Lady' keeps on trucking. Juventus secured a 28th Serie A title without even having to play when a Milan reserve side drew 3-3 at home to Palermo five days before the Istanbul Final. Having gone into the clash with Milan at San Siro level on points, Juventus did just enough to win that game, and then within a week had gone five points clear when Milan slipped up again, held to a 2-2 draw away to Lecce. At that stage, with just two games to play and a five-point lead, Juventus were home and dry.

It would be hard to overstate the contribution made by coach Fabio Capello to the Juventus success this season. Although his side were often more diligent and disciplined than inspired or creative, the coach claimed his side were worthy title winners. "You know, it's very difficult for a side to close the gap," he said. "Milan closed back level with us twice this season but each time we went clear again, and that proves that we had huge self-belief, even if we had huge respect for the strengths of the other teams, in particular for Milan.

"For me, the key to our title win was our 1-0 away win to Lazio [in April], a game played at a time when we were in a real emergency because of injuries. I believe that all title wins are the result of good teamwork, of pulling together to realise your objectives, because on your own you achieve nothing."

Reflecting on the fact that he has now won League titles with Milan, Roma, Real Madrid and Juventus, Capello offered the following intriguing comment: "Of the four clubs where I have won, I would say that the most difficult was at Roma, because Roma is a club and Rome is a city where it is not easy to win, where people are not accustomed to winning. At Milan, it was par for the course to lift the title, while Real Madrid have success written into their DNA, and you could say the same thing about Juventus. Indeed, we're already programming next season here."

Whether Alessandro Del Piero will still be in Juve's ranks for that campaign remains to be seen. On the eve of this season's final League game, a meaningless 4-2 home win over Cagliari, Capello and Del Piero had a bitter, public exchange via newspaper columns.

The forward indicated that he would be reluctant to spend another season at Juventus if that meant similar treatment to this season, when he was often substituted by Capello. The coach responded quickly, saying that there are no special conditions for anyone at any club coached by him.

Juve and Milan take the automatic group spots in next term's Champions League, with Inter and, for the first time, Udinese going into the qualifiers. Sampdoria, Palermo and Roma (by virtue of reaching the Cup Final against Inter) go into the UEFA Cup, Atalanta and Brescia are definitely relegated, and Parma and Bologna head for a relegation play-off.

Bad end...Guidolin

● Despite steering Palermo to promotion to Serie A last season and a UEFA Cup place this term, coach Francisco Guidolin was sacked. "The team's slump in the past few weeks is undoubtedly Guidolin's fault," said club president Maurizio Zamparini. "I'm sorry, but for Sicilian tastes he is too introverted."

'We made some mistakes but paid a heavy price for them'

Carlo Ancelotti reflects on the Istanbul debacle

Le Guen floats away

Lyon prepare for life under new coach Houllier after a fourth consecutive League title

HOWARD JOHNSON in Lyon

SYLVAIN WILTORD may be sleeping a little less easy after the events of Sunday, May 29. And it will have nothing to do with a post-party hangover. The day after Olympique Lyonnais celebrated their fourth consecutive Ligue 1 title – their third under departing coach Paul Le Guen – with a presentation of the trophy following their last game of the season, club president Jean-Michel Aulas finally put an end to the guessing game that had been gripping the whole of France. Gerard Houllier will be in charge of OL next season. As far as Wiltord, Lyon's former Arsenal striker, was concerned, it was the worst possible appointment.

Wiltord had gone in front of the cameras of the club's own television station five days previously to discuss potential new coaches and had bluntly stated "*Surtout pas Houllier*" – "Anybody but Houllier". The soundbite was then used all over the French press in the days before Aulas finally presented the one-time national coach and former Liverpool manager as his new man.

"I was surprised [by Wiltord's comment]," said Aulas. "But [Lyon skipper] Claudio Cacapa told me it happened the morning after a particularly good night." A bizarre mitigation, for sure, but both Aulas and Houllier seemed unconcerned by Wiltord's outburst. "One player doesn't make a team," stated the president, while the new coach played the whole thing down when saying: "Everyone has the right to an opinion. And my opinion is that it's really important that we keep Sylvain Wiltord."

Regardless of anyone else's opinion on coaches, Aulas is convinced he has the right man for the job, even if there are those who remain unconvinced by the appointment – not least because of Houllier's well-documented health problems. "He seemed very dynamic to me," countered Aulas. "And we did all kinds of cardiac tests here in Lyon."

It was 57-year-old Houllier's 2001 UEFA Cup success with Liverpool that most impressed his new boss, though. Lyon have been the dominant team in France for the past five years and this season have shown their teeth in top European competition too.

Water feature... Le Guen looks back pensively after being thrown in the club pool by his players following the title-clinching home victory over Ajaccio

They were mightily unlucky to go out of the Champions League at the quarter-final stage on penalties to PSV Eindhoven after scoring a whopping 28 goals in just nine games. But Aulas is determined to see his club go on a step further and actually lift a European trophy. The fact that Houllier has already done it proved a big plus in his favour.

"Gerard was the first person I saw, in Paris on May 10," said Aulas. This was the very next day after Le Guen's announcement that he would be leaving. "But I had to be absolutely convinced he had a real desire to manage this club." Having made his mind up that this was the case, Aulas offered the job to Houllier, who said yes on the day of Liverpool's Champions League triumph. "For me, that was a sign," said Aulas.

Houllier, who has been out of managerial work since leaving Liverpool at the end of the 2003-04 season, is unsurprisingly delighted to have signed a two-year deal with a one-year option.

"When a club like Lyon, which is now one of the best in Europe, makes an approach, then you don't turn it down," he explained.

That might be the case for Houllier, but it appears not to have been for Lille boss Claude Puel, the man originally most touted for the job. Puel's performance in turning unfashionable Lille into a side that finished second in Ligue 1, thus qualifying for next season's Champions League, impressed everyone in France, not least Aulas, who sounded him out for Lyon. "I'm honoured that President Aulas thought of me," Puel told sports daily *L'Equipe*. "But I'm under contract at Lille and contracts are important."

This may well be true, but bringing Puel to Stade Gerland would have been a tricky process. After all, Lille president Michel Seydoux used to be a big noise at Lyon himself and his brother Jerome is still an important cog in the wheel at OL. This family connection appears to have been a big spanner in the works for Puel.

Of course, now that Houllier has the most coveted job in French domestic football, the real work needs to begin – and he has plenty to live up to. "I know that if we finish second in the League next season that will be a failure," he said. "But I really want to reach new heights with this team."

That will be easier said than done, even if Houllier can make his peace with Wiltord. The club has accepted that hot-property striker Sidney Govou is likely to be on his way, possibly to Juventus (after Arsenal were frightened off by a hefty asking price), but Aulas insists that the rest of his contracted players will all be at the club for the start of the next campaign.

It won't be easy to keep that promise, though. There are plenty of OL players who are currently highly prized by Europe's leading clubs. Chelsea's interest in Ghanaian midfielder Michael Essien (recently voted the best player in the French League by his fellow pros) has been well documented. "We told them to go back where they came from," said Aulas.

Defender Mahamadou Diarra is apparently wanted by Internazionale, Brazilian captain Cacapa's reputation grows almost by the hour and midfield men Florent Malouda and Brazilian Juninho have been the subject of constant rumours.

The fact that there were no fewer than six *Lyonnais* in the 18 chosen by France coach Raymond Domenech for the game against Hungary on May 31 (Gregory Coupet, Eric Abidal, Anthony Reveillere, Govou, Malouda and Wiltord) will have done nothing to dampen the ardour of potential suitors. Govou himself has a word of warning on that score, saying: "Remember last season, when everyone said that [striker] Peguy Luyindula wasn't for sale, either? Well, he was with Marseille before the start of the campaign."

What of arrivals at Gerland? Aulas has admitted that the side lack a killer striker, but has been quick to announce that "Olympique Lyonnais doesn't have the means with which to bring players like Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Fernando Torres and David Trezeguet on board". But with Govou highly admired by Juventus, Trezeguet would not appear to be completely out of the question. Lyon is just two and a half hours from Turin and it is the city in which the player had a shoulder operation last autumn and spent a few weeks rehabilitating. Trezeguet even pitched up to watch OL a couple of times.

There is no doubt that Houllier has by far the best squad in France at his disposal, but there will be no time for a gentle bedding-in. A fifth consecutive League title (something no French club has achieved) is the bare minimum target for the former national team manager. And it has been 17 years since Houllier was last involved in French domestic football, with Paris Saint-Germain.

Add to that Aulas' burning desire to win the Champions League sooner rather than later and the pressure is well and truly on. Le Guen – reported by daily paper *Le Parisien* to be on his way to Turkish champions Fenerbahce on a three-year contract reputedly worth £1.8million a year – quit while he was ahead. Houllier will have done remarkably well if he ever gets the chance to do the same.

Impressive start...Fournier

● Manager Laurent Fournier has made such a good impression at Paris Saint-Germain since replacing the hapless Vahid Halilhodzic back in February that he has already been given a two-year extension to an initial contract that only ran to the end of the season. This, despite PSG finishing the campaign in mid-table obscurity. Bitter rivals Marseille could be parting company with coach Philippe Troussier, though, after an equally disappointing season. "It's been a positive experience," said a sanguine, though possibly blinkered, Troussier.

'When a club like Lyon, one of the best in Europe, makes an approach, you don't turn it down'

Gerard Houllier is happy to be back on the coaching merry-go-round

Passarella gets the push

Crisis-hit Corinthians give the Argentinian coach short shrift

BRIAN HOMEWOOD in Rio de Janeiro

DANIEL PASSARELLA HAD probably picked up just about enough Portuguese in his two months at Corinthians to understand the words: "*Voce esta demitido.*" Yes, just 15 matches after being picked to lead the club into the brave new world of Media Sports Investments the former Argentina captain and World Cup coach was sacked.

He was the second coach to be dismissed in the four months since Corinthians signed their controversial 10-year partnership deal with the shadowy London-based group of investors.

The Sao Paulo-based club, who claimed the deal would make them the envy of Brazilian football, were in danger of becoming a laughing stock, a story of training ground fist-fights, protesting supporters and boardroom chaos.

In the four months since the deal was signed, Corinthians had spent around £20million on new signings, finished runners-up to Sao Paulo in the Paulista state championship, were out of the Copa Brasil and languishing in 15th place in the Brazilian championship. The players were apparently in control and the directors were arguing among themselves.

MSI's Iran-born president, Kia Joorabchian, had initially revelled in his celebrity status, signing autographs for fans during training sessions and the like. But he was quickly forced to adopt a style more reminiscent of Roman Abramovich, with whom he is suspected of having close connections. After the meeting that sealed Passarella's fate, Joorabchian was ushered past waiting reporters by an army of security guards and sped away in a car with black-tinted windows.

Passarella did oversee an 11-match unbeaten run but that was in the half-pint Paulista championship. A training ground fight, shown on national television, between top signing Carlos Tevez and defender Marquinhos suggested there might be a few cracks in the squad, and once the Brazilian championship started, Corinthians disintegrated.

They started with a 2-2 draw at home to Juventude, then lost 3-1 at Botafogo before the real crisis hove into view. First, they

Quick exit...Passarella was sacked after only 15 games in charge

were knocked out of the Copa Brasil – the shortest route to the Libertadores Cup – by Figueirense on penalties having held a 2-0 lead from the first leg.

Five days later, they capitulated 5-1 at home to local rivals Sao Paulo, a truly spectacular defeat that included several interruptions as angry fans scaled the fences around the pitch, ran on to the field and tried to attack Passarella. To add insult to injury, the protests earned Corinthians a three-match home ban, which, under new rules, also means playing behind closed doors.

Forty-eight hours of humming and harring later, Passarella was fired. Joorabchian, no doubt remembering that MSI had agreed to a £770,000 penalty clause for early dismissal in Passarella's contract, voted to keep the Argentinian. But the board, led by president Alberto Dualib, preferred to remain faithful to the Brazilian principle that three defeats add up to an untenable situation, which adds up to the sack.

Passarella's undoing

After that, it all turned very messy. MSI offered Passarella a post as "international co-ordinator", a remarkably transparent way of trying to wriggle out of paying his compensation, which he turned down. MSI refused to pay up anyway, arguing the coach had to accept whatever post he was offered, and Passarella sued, saying he had been appointed as coach and nothing more.

Passarella's undoing was that he actually believed he was in charge of the team. Two days before the Figueirense match, he barred goalkeeper Fabio Costa from the squad, saying: "He doesn't have the profile I want in a goalkeeper." This is a big no-no in Brazil, where it is the directors who hire and fire players, and Passarella's action immediately upset football vice-president Andres Sanches, who had brought the volatile keeper to the club in the first place.

The Argentinian also fell out with mercurial midfielder Roger by asking him to do some marking, repeatedly substituting him, then leaving him on the bench for the Figueirense game. Roger came on in the second half and made a significant contribution to Passarella's downfall when he fired wildly over the bar during the penalty shoot-out.

New coach Marcio Bittencourt showed how it should be done when Corinthians faced the same opponents three weeks later in the Brazilian championship. During the second half, Roger – included from the start and having put his side 2-1 up – told Bittencourt from the pitch that the midfield needed shoring up. Bittencourt obliged in less than a minute, sending on defensive midfielder Wendel in place of striker Bobo. "The situation is totally different now," enthused Roger afterwards. "I'm much happier with Marcio because of the position he fields me in."

All this was lapped up by the critics of the MSI deal. Hardly a day went by without Roque Citadini, the Corinthians football vice-president who resigned when MSI arrived, appearing on television and gleefully telling everyone he told them so. Citadini had been opposed to the deal from the outset, warning that Joorabchian had no background in sport, let alone the volatile world of Brazilian professional football.

"Corinthians have the best squad in Brazil and the most amateurish administration," said Citadini, who went on to compare Joorabchian to Al Capone.

The Iranian hit back. "When I hear Citadini talk about football, I realise he doesn't understand anything. Last year, he signed two strikers who scored three goals in 48 games," said Joorabchian, referring to Marcelo Ramos and Alberto.

Santos were the early leaders in the championship, ahead on goal difference after five games from Botafogo and Fluminense. The Rio pair both won their opening four matches, but then conceded four goals as they lost their 100 per cent records – Botafogo 4-0 at Goias and 'Flu' 4-2 at home to Coritiba.

Goias got the Dance of the Coaches off to a flying start when they fired Pericles Chamusca after their first game – which they won 2-0 at Parana. Passarella was next, followed by Brazil's 1986 World Cup defender Edinho, who lasted six games at Atletico Paranaense.

Vasco da Gama became the first team to win a match in the boardroom when they were awarded all three points from their 2-2 draw at Brasiliense. The team from the capital were penalised after ignoring a disciplinary tribunal's decision to play the match behind closed doors. Romario, recently given his international send-off at the age of 39 in a friendly against Guatemala, was on target for Vasco.

The Guatemala game, which Brazil won 3-0 (Romario scored the second goal), had been arranged to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Globo television, but the fans did not play ball. The supporters on the far side of the Sao Paulo stadium were supposed to raise a huge banner with the Globo logo. Instead, they tore holes in it. Then, once Romario had gone off following a lap of honour, the fans amused themselves by insulting Globo's commentators and chanting the name of the network's arch-rival, SBT.

Madrid target...Robinho

● Santos' bid to retain the national championship has been boosted by having clung on – so far, at least – to star player Robinho, despite almost daily stories in the Spanish media linking him with Real Madrid. Santos president Marcelo Teixeira is determined to keep the 21-year-old at the club for another year, suggesting that a move abroad now could spoil his chances of playing at the 2006 World Cup. "A transfer to Europe would need adaptation to new customs and food, among other things," said Teixeira. "He could go the same way as [former team-mate] Diego, who after being transferred to Porto, in Portugal, is no longer being picked [by Brazil]." Diego burst on to the scene at the same time as Robinho – during Santos' triumphant 2002 national championship campaign.

'Corinthians have the best squad in Brazil and the most amateurish administration'

Former club vice-president Roque Citadini hits out at the new Corinthians set-up

THE TOP 100 NAUGHTIEST CELEBS OUT NOW

WS WORLD SOCCER

Review of the season

2004-05 THE VERDICT

The winners, the losers, the outstanding performers and headline-makers

The wonder of

MORNING IN ISTANBUL before the match and Liverpool fans are straggling along the river front, their glazed expressions either a product of a long night on the town or disbelief at being in the Champions League Final at all.

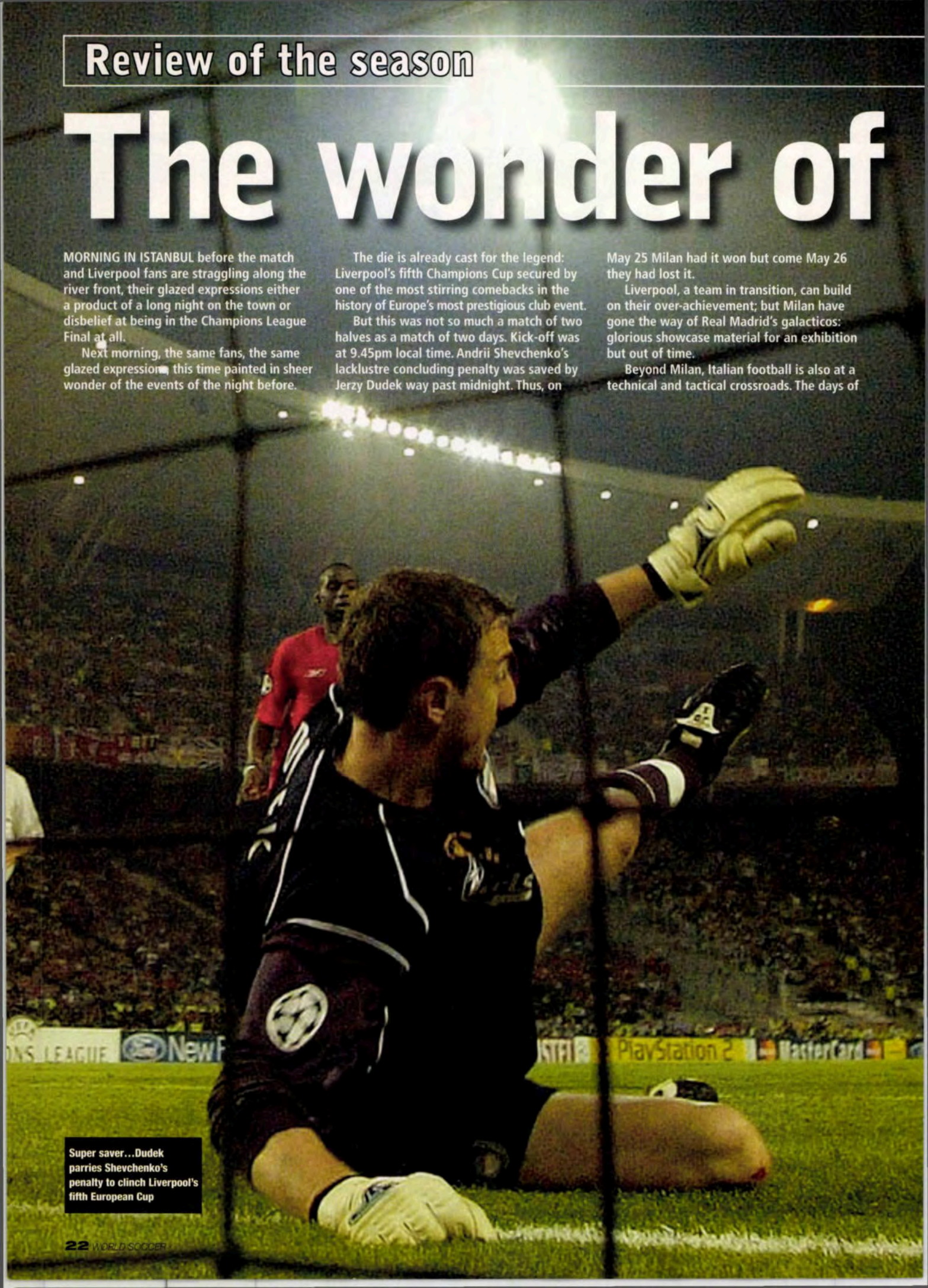
Next morning, the same fans, the same glazed expressions, this time painted in sheer wonder of the events of the night before.

The die is already cast for the legend: Liverpool's fifth Champions Cup secured by one of the most stirring comebacks in the history of Europe's most prestigious club event.

But this was not so much a match of two halves as a match of two days. Kick-off was at 9.45pm local time. Andrii Shevchenko's lacklustre concluding penalty was saved by Jerzy Dudek way past midnight. Thus, on May 25 Milan had it won but come May 26 they had lost it.

Liverpool, a team in transition, can build on their over-achievement; but Milan have gone the way of Real Madrid's galacticos: glorious showcase material for an exhibition but out of time.

Beyond Milan, Italian football is also at a technical and tactical crossroads. The days of



Super saver...Dudek parries Shevchenko's penalty to clinch Liverpool's fifth European Cup

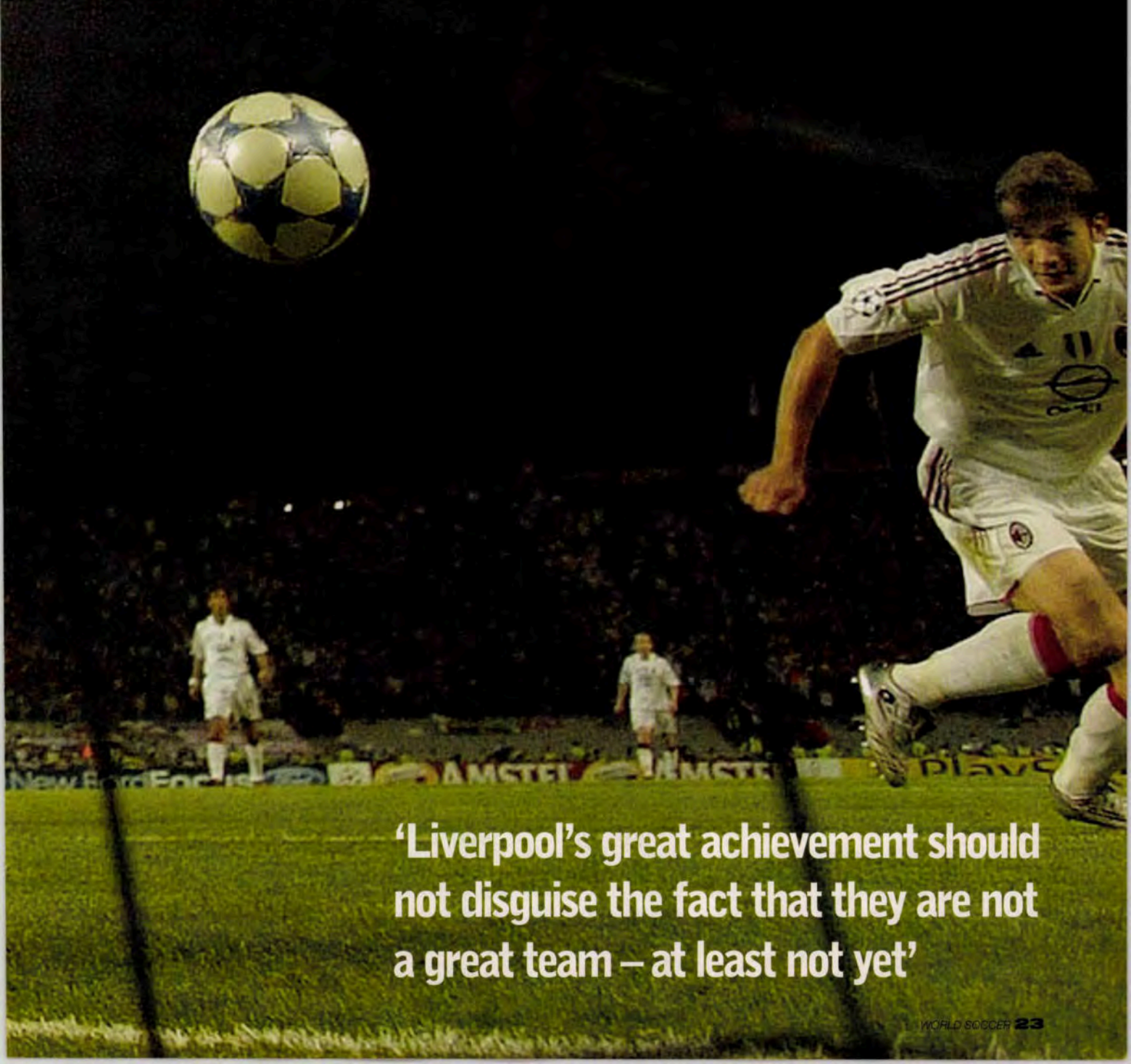
Istanbul

Keir Radnedge witnesses one of the most dramatic comebacks in the history of European club football

catenaccio have long gone. Arrigo Sacchi, at Milan in the late 1980s, raised a progressive style, but one suited to his players at the time not to an entire future generation. After seeing the efforts of Juventus and Milan against Liverpool, the conclusion must be that Italian clubs and their coaches now don't know how to defend or attack effectively, certainly not at the highest level. And Liverpool's great achievement in battling back to win from 3-0 down should not disguise the fact that this is no great team – at least not yet.

At one stage in the second half, after Liverpool had pulled back to 3-3, I noticed Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti stand as if frozen in the middle of his technical area. Then he slowly turned around and vanished back into the dugout. It was as if he had conceded defeat already: his players had got themselves into this mess, it was up to them to get themselves out of it; his demeanour suggested he thought it beyond them.

Ancelotti did not help himself with his starting line-up and substitutions. He had infuriated striker Pippo Inzaghi – who had worked hard for six weeks to be ready for a



'Liverpool's great achievement should not disguise the fact that they are not a great team – at least not yet'

Where did it all go wrong?... Gerrard and Benitez at 3-0 down

role in the Final – by omitting him from the squad. The coach's reasoning was that he wanted the option of an extra midfielder. Yet euphoria clouded Ancelotti's judgement at half-time, when he declined to shut up shop with his side 3-0 ahead. Instead, he left the old brigade at the mercy of both Liverpool and their own ageing legs.

As for Liverpool's Rafael Benitez, he got everything utterly wrong, from team selection to tactics, but was rescued in the most spectacular way by his players. The Spaniard tried to justify the inclusion of Harry Kewell on the grounds that he wanted his side to be aggressive from the start. Aggression is fine, even essential. But balance is far more important.

At half-time, as skipper Steven Gerrard conceded afterwards, Liverpool's only target was to stave off humiliation in the second half. The question never to be resolved is whether the crucial replacement of Steve Finnan with Didi Hamann was a product of Benitez's tactical awakening or sheer luck.

Benitez's words were: "At half-time we changed something after the staff said to me that Finnan was injured."

A few minutes later, questioned on that point by the BBC's Mike Ingham, Benitez backtracked, saying: "We were making changes anyway."

Not for a moment decrying the selection of Gerrard as man of the match, the most influential player in Liverpool's victory was Hamann.

In the first half, Andrea Pirlo and Kaka had skipped merrily through the chasm between Gerrard and Xabi Alonso in the Liverpool midfield. Once Hamann arrived, the silky passing route was closed off, Milan were halted in their tracks and Liverpool had the springboard for glory.

Milan had taken just 53 first-half seconds to find the Liverpool net. Kaka was fouled by Djimi Traore out on the right, Pirlo clipped in the free-kick and skipper Paolo Maldini became simultaneously the fastest scorer in a Champions Cup Final and, at 36, also the oldest.

Pirlo was masterful at this stage – popping up everywhere to take passes and sending his fellow midfielders and his strikers into attacking channels Liverpool never knew existed.

Gennaro Gattuso and Cafu joined him in making countless neat little triangles out on the right. Liverpool looked threadbare in midfield until injury forced the replacement of the hapless Kewell with Vladimir Smicer.

Crespo's double

The adjustment still seemed to have come too late. Shevchenko had a goal disallowed for offside in the 29th minute but Hernan Crespo struck twice for real in a six-minute spell just before half-time.

The Chelsea loanee's first was another example of Liverpool's lack of focus. Milan Baros was still claiming what would have been a ridiculous penalty for handball against the fallen Alessandro Nesta as Kaka and Shevchenko combined to set up Crespo in a classic Italian counter-attack. Five minutes later, Kaka, given the freedom of the stadium, bisected Liverpool's defence with a wonderful angled pass. Crespo did the rest with style.

2005 UEFA Champions League Final

May 25 - Ataturk Olympic stadium, Istanbul
Liverpool 3 (Gerrard 53, Smicer 55, Xabi Alonso 59)
Milan 3 (Maldini 1, Crespo 38, 43)
Aet. **HT:** 0-3. **90mins:** 3-3. **Att:** 69,000. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Liverpool 3-2 on pens
Liverpool (4-4-2):
Dudek - Finnan (Hamann 46), Carragher, Hyypia, Traore - Luis Garcia, Gerrard, Xabi Alonso, Riise - Baros (Cisse 83), Kewell (Smicer 22).
Coach: Benitez. Subs not used: Carson, Josemi, Nunez, Biscan.
Milan (4-4-2):
Dida - Cafu, Nesta, Stam, Maldini - Kaka, Pirlo, Gattuso (Rui Costa 111), Seedorf (Serginho 83) - Crespo (Tomasson 83), Shevchenko.
Coach: Ancelotti. Subs not used: Abbiati, Kaladze, Costacurta, Dhorasoo.
Penalty shoot-out (Milan first):
Serginho (over bar) 0-0, Hamann 0-1; Pirlo (saved) 0-1, Cisse 0-2; Tomasson 1-2, Riise (saved) 1-2; Kaka 2-2, Smicer 2-3; Shevchenko (saved) 2-3.

At half-time Milan were already celebrating as Liverpool, through a mixture of design and accident, came up with the team that might have been expected to start the game. Hamann brought strength and wisdom, Gerrard tightened up on Pirlo, and the reward was a record-breaking recovery of three goals in six magical minutes.

"Six minutes of madness I can't explain," was how Ancelotti put it, sparing keeper Dida from public blame for the first two goals.

Gerrard headed Liverpool's opener from John Arne Riise's left-wing cross to bring the fans back to life. Smicer thundered the second off Dida's hands, and Xabi Alonso stabbed home the rebound after Dida had parried his penalty following Gattuso's trip of Gerrard.

The Milan midfielder was fortunate not to be sent off but maybe Spanish referee Manuel Enrique Mejuto Gonzalez did not want to be the first to dismiss a player in a Champions Cup Final.

Milan recovered a little of their composure in extra-time but Pirlo's shooting was wayward and there was no disguising that the spring had gone out of their step. Substitute Serginho went out wide on the left but the tactical advantage was nullified by his poor distribution.

Liverpool were, as Gerrard put it, "running on empty" and playing for penalties. But it took the much-criticised Dudek to get them that far with a remarkable double save from Shevchenko in the 117th minute.

When Serginho and Pirlo wasted Milan's first two penalties, the writing was on the wall, and the Polish keeper duly earned a place up alongside Bruce Grobbelaar in Anfield folklore.

English clubs may not often win Europe's most prestigious club prize but when they do they do it in the most memorable style. To the dramatics of Manchester United in Barcelona in 1999 now add Liverpool in Istanbul in 2005. Twenty years, almost to the day, after Heysel.

Sinking feeling...Serginho and Dida watch Liverpool celebrate

WHAT THEY SAID

RAFA BENITEZ
"We started really badly. We made a silly mistake in the first minute. At half-time we changed something after the staff said to me that Finnan was injured. Then we played with three defenders. We had to do something. We could not have afforded to lose by four or five goals. Will they let us defend the cup? Common sense says we must."

CARLO ANCELOTTI
"It was a really strange match. We played really well then we had six minutes of madness which changed everything. I can't explain it. We had so many chances and we were the best team on the pitch. Most times when you play well you win, but sometimes it happens that you play well and you don't manage it."

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

Minute by minute...

the action as it happened

0...Liverpool kick off

53 seconds...GOAL! Kaka is brought down by Traore on the right flank. Pirlo's free-kick is volleyed in by the unmarked MALDINI. His shot bounces into the ground and into the net. MILAN 1 LIVERPOOL 0.

4...Liverpool's first goal effort, but Hyypia heads straight at Dida.

13...Shevchenko is penalised for handball after almost breaking clear from Carragher.

14...Crespo's header from Seedorf's corner is headed off the line by Luis Garcia.

18...Milan launch another attack; Kaka heads wide after initiating the move in his own half.

22...SUBSTITUTION: Smicer replaces Kewell, who appears to be injured.

29...Shevchenko is fractionally offside when he latches on to Kaka's pass to slide the ball past Dudek. Goal disallowed.

32...Shevchenko breaks clear again, but this time his shot is smothered by Dudek.

33...Luis Garcia gets into a good position on the edge of the Milan area but blasts his shot over.

36...Luis Garcia again misses the target after a confident build-up, with Baros heading on Gerrard's cross-field pass.

38...GOAL! Milan launch a counter-attack with Liverpool distracted by an appeal for handball in the Milan area. Kaka sweeps forward, feeds Shevchenko on the right, his cross is turned in by CRESPO at far post. MILAN 2 LIVERPOOL 0.

43...GOAL! Kaka evades Gerrard on the halfway line and plays a wonderful ball forward to CRESPO, who chips over Dudek. MILAN 3 LIVERPOOL 0.

HALF-TIME

46...SUBSTITUTION: Hamann for Finnan. Liverpool switch to a back three. Hamann's arrival in central midfield allows Gerrard to move further forward.

50...Xabi Alonso hits a powerful low drive from outside the area just past Dida's right-hand post.

53...Shevchenko sees his goalbound free-kick tipped wide by Dudek.

53...GOAL! GERRARD's well-directed header from Riise's left-flank cross flies past Dida and into the far corner of the net. MILAN 3 LIVERPOOL 1.

55...GOAL! After a patient build-up, SMICER fires a low drive from outside the area. Dida can only tip the ball into the net. MILAN 3 LIVERPOOL 2.

58...Gerrard wins a penalty after he is impeded in the Milan area by Gattuso.

59...GOAL! Dida saves the penalty from XABI ALONSO, who is first to the rebound and clips the ball high into the net. MILAN 3 LIVERPOOL 3.

63...Riise forces a save from Dida with a powerful shot from long-range.

70...Shevchenko almost scores after Dudek fumbles Kaka's cross, but his goalbound shot is cleared off the line by Traore.

71...Gerrard shoots over from outside the area.

74...Smicer shoots over when it might have been better to pass.

76...Carragher BOOKED for a foul for a badly-timed tackle on Kaka.

80...Kaka is brilliantly tackled by Carragher after being played in at close range by Crespo.

81...Baros BOOKED for foul on Cafu.

83...SUBSTITUTIONS: Cisse replaces Baros; Tomasson replaces Crespo; Serginho replaces Seedorf.

89...Kaka just fails to direct Stam's header towards goal.

EXTRA-TIME

95...Pirlo sends a direct free-kick over the bar.

102...Tomasson is inches away from connecting with Serginho's long cross.

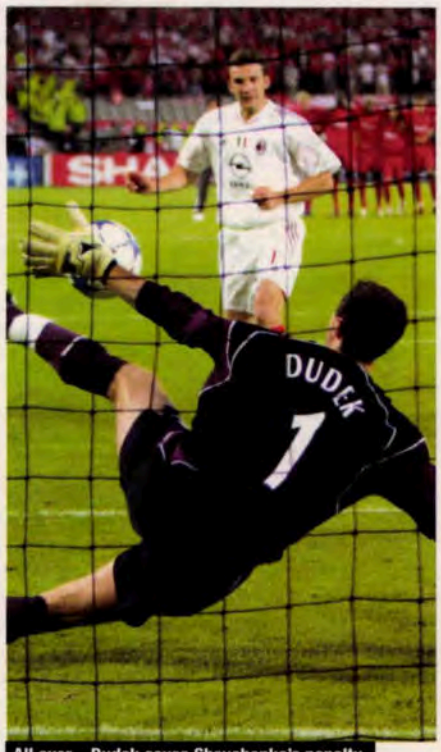
111...SUBSTITUTION: Rui Costa replaces Gattuso.

113...A Rui Costa corner evades everyone and whistles past the far post.

115...Milan finish the stronger as Pirlo's free-kick is deflected behind for a corner.

117...Dudek makes a spectacular double save from Shevchenko, first pushing away a powerful header, then somehow blocking a shot at point-blank range.

PENALTY SHOOT-OUT
(Milan first)
- Serginho blasts over bar;
Milan 0 Liverpool 0.
- Hamann fires low to Dida's right;
Milan 0 Liverpool 1.
- Pirlo's shot is brilliantly saved by Dudek;
Milan 0 Liverpool 1.
- Cisse shoots comfortably past Dida;
Milan 0 Liverpool 2.
- Tomasson hits a weak penalty but Dudek dives wrong way;
Milan 1 Liverpool 2.
- Riise's shot is tipped away by Dida at full stretch;
Milan 1 Liverpool 2.
- Kaka calmly shoots past Dudek;
Milan 2 Liverpool 2.
- Smicer fires firmly past Dida;
Milan 2 Liverpool 3.
- Shevchenko's shot is pushed away one-handed by Dudek;
Milan 2 Liverpool 3.



All over...Dudek saves Shevchenko's penalty

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

Liverpool, 2005 European champions

Kings of Istanbul...Steven Gerrard lifts Liverpool's fifth European Cup

Jerzy DUDEK (Pol)

Born: 23.03.73. Goalkeeper who performed heroics in the Final, producing a remarkable double save at point-blank range from Shevchenko in extra-time and then saving two penalties during the shoot-out. Signed from Feyenoord in 2001 for £5.5million but is out of contract this summer; the Istanbul Final was probably his last game for Liverpool.

Steve FINNAN (Ire)

20.04.76. Attack-minded Irish international right-back signed from Fulham in 2003 for £3.5m. Held on to his place in the face of strong competition from Josemi this season, but substituted at half-time in Istanbul, apparently because of injury.

Jamie CARRAGHER

28.01.78. One of the players of the season. An accomplished centre-back whose outstanding performances against Juventus, Chelsea and Milan were crucial to Liverpool's success. Injuries have restricted his international career, but his recent form and versatility should mean he plays a significant role in next year's World Cup finals. Liverpool born and bred.

Sami HYYPIA (Fin)

07.10.73. Finnish international centre-back signed from Willem II in 1999 for £3.5m. Club captain when Liverpool won five trophies in 2001 (UEFA Cup, FA Cup, League Cup, European Supercup and Community Shield), but his form has wavered since then. Still a commanding presence in the air and scored a vital early goal against Juventus in the quarter-final first leg.

Djimi TRAORE (Fra)

01.03.80. Versatile defender who joined Liverpool in February 1999 for £600,000 but has found competition for places tough and been on the receiving end of criticism from fans. Spent the 2001-02 season on loan at Lens, but has established himself as the regular left-back under Benitez.

Steven GERRARD

30.05.80. Inspirational captain whose dynamic performance in Istanbul confirmed his reputation as one of the best midfielders in world football. Born locally in Huyton, he made his Liverpool debut in November 1998 and was appointed club captain in 2002. Almost joined Chelsea last summer but said after the Istanbul Final that he was ready to commit himself to Liverpool.

XABI ALONSO (Spa)

25.11.81. Spanish international midfielder with a wonderful range of passing. Signed from Real Sociedad last summer in a £10m deal. Broke an ankle in a League match against Chelsea on January 1, but recovered to play a crucial role in the later stages of the Champions League campaign.

John Arne RIISE (Nor)

24.09.80. Left-sided Norwegian international with a thunderous shot. Joined Liverpool from Monaco in summer 2001 for £4.5m. Has played in midfield under Benitez, but can also play as an attacking left-back.

Harry KEWELL (Aus)

22.09.78. Australian international who has endured heavy criticism for his lacklustre performances since joining from Leeds in summer 2003. A surprise selection in the Istanbul starting line-up after a season hit by injuries and poor form. On his day, a brilliant left-sided forward or attacking midfielder, but his Anfield future is uncertain.

LUIS GARCIA (Spa)

24.06.78. Barcelona-born winger or second striker who was Liverpool's top scorer in the Champions League campaign. Joined from Barcelona last summer having spent the bulk of his career away from Camp Nou, at Valladolid, Toledo, Tenerife and Atletico Madrid. Impressed in Barca's UEFA Cup campaign last year, but it was still a surprise when Liverpool paid more than £6m for him last summer.

Milan BAROS (Cze)

28.10.81. Czech international striker signed from Banik Ostrava for £3.4m in December 2001. Top scorer at Euro 2004, but has struggled to win over Liverpool fans this season and is set to leave the club this summer.

SUBSTITUTES

Vladimir SMICER (Cze)

24.05.73. Czech international who is the only player to have scored at three consecutive European Championship finals (1996, 2000 and 2004). Signed from Lens in summer 1999 and took the roaming midfield role vacated by Steve McManaman. Out of contract and likely to move on this summer, despite his goal in the Istanbul Final.

Dietmar HAMANN (Ger)

27.08.73. German international who performs a vital midfield holding role but was surprisingly omitted from the Istanbul starting line-up. Joined from Newcastle in 1999 for a then record £9million. A regular for Germany at the 1998 and 2002 World Cups, as well as Euro 2000 and 2004.

Djibril CISSE (Fra)

12.08.81. Powerful French international striker who made a remarkable recovery from a broken leg suffered in a League game against Blackburn last October. Signed from Auxerre for a club record £14.5m last summer. Forced to sit out Euro 2004 because of a suspension incurred after being sent off while playing for the French Under-21s.

SUBSTITUTES NOT USED

Scott CARSON

03.09.85. England Under-21 keeper signed from Leeds earlier this year.

JOSEMI (Spa)

15.11.79. Right-sided defender who was Benitez's first signing in July 2004, costing £2m from Malaga.

Antonio NUNEZ (Spa)

15.01.79. Midfielder who joined from Real Madrid as the makeweight in the Michael Owen transfer. Has had little impact at Anfield, despite being valued at £1m.

Igor BISCAN (Cro)

04.05.78. Croatian international midfielder who has never quite lived up to the reputation he acquired at Dinamo Zagreb. Performed well in Europe as cover for the injured Xabi Alonso, but is still expected to leave Anfield this summer.

ALSO...

Stephen WARNOCK

12.12.81. Locally-born left-sided defender or midfielder. Made his debut in the Champions League qualifying tie against Austria's Grazer AK.

Anthony LE TALLEC (Fra)

01.10.84. One of the stars of France's World Under-17 Championship-winning side. Spent the first half of the season on loan at Saint-Etienne before being recalled to Anfield.

Darren POTTER

21.12.84. Another academy boy who made his debut against Grazer AK but played little after that.

Florent SINAMA-PONGOLLE (Fra)

20.10.84. Born on the French Indian Ocean island of Reunion and a teenage prodigy in France. Top scorer in France's World Under-17 campaign in 2001. Ruled out for the season after damaging knee ligaments in January.

Neil MELLOR

04.11.82. Striker who suffered knee injuries in March and missed the rest of the season. Son of former Man City player Ian Mellor.

Fernando MORIENTES (Spa)

05.04.76. Hugely experienced Spanish international striker who was Cup-tied in European competition after joining from Real Madrid in January. Spent the 2003-04 season on loan at Monaco.

Mauricio PELLEGRINO (Arg)

15.10.71. Central defender who was released by Valencia in the winter break. Cup-tied in the Champions League.

Rafa-lution!

Benitez's tactical switches over 120 minutes won the game for Liverpool

THERE WAS METHOD in what Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti described as "six minutes of madness". The breathtaking three-goal salvo from Liverpool that brought a confident, cruising Milan to their knees was not just the result of marauding captain Steven Gerrard and the magnificent travelling Kop. It was also down to the canny tactical changes engineered by Rafa Benitez.

Part of his half-time brainwave was merely to recognise his own initial mistakes, such was the scoreline's indictment of his omission of Dietmar Hamann and baffling inclusion of Harry Kewell. But his switch from four to three across the back was to prove inspired.

By replacing full-back Steve Finnan with Hamann, Benitez tackled the problem that had seen his side humiliated in the opening half: the performance of playmaker Kaka. Involved in all three Milan goals and Andrii Shevchenko's disallowed strike, the Brazilian relentlessly exploited the gap between Liverpool's defence and midfield.

Hamann was sent out to patrol the zone in which Kaka was roaming to such embarrassing effect and his impact was immediate. Kaka's influence faded and Gerrard and Xabi Alonso, suddenly free to venture forward, went about making European Cup history.

To accommodate the German and to keep his two world-class midfielders on the pitch, Benitez played with three in defence, Djimi Traore tucking in to his favoured centre-back role alongside Sami Hyypia and Jamie Carragher. The switch not only freed up personnel further up the pitch but was also an astute recognition that the source of Milan's threat was not down the wings.

When Ancelotti finally decided to introduce some width, encouraging Cafu down the right and bringing on Serginho, Benitez responded in kind. Gerrard was dragged out to play at right-back as part of a five-man defence, with Riise dropping back on the other flank.

Throughout the tournament Benitez has known exactly when to either launch a raid or dig a trench and during extra-time he saw that Liverpool were "running on empty", as Gerrard would later concede. It was time to hold firm. Milan pressed and probed but Liverpool resisted, drawing upon their performances against Juventus and Chelsea.

No amount of tactical ponderings can prepare players for penalties. But when Jerzy Dudek borrowed a move from a Liverpool legend, aping Bruce Grobbelaar's antics of 1984 to clinch a fifth European title for the club, Benitez ensured his name would be added to the illustrious annals of Anfield history.

James Kearns

Kick-off: Both sides start with 4-4-2s

Half-time: Liverpool switch to a back three, with Hamann's arrival allowing Gerrard to push forward

Extra-time: With sub Serginho giving Milan greater width, Gerrard switches to right-back, as Liverpool cling on

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

Captain fantastic

Steven Gerrard, Liverpool's man of the match in Istanbul, talks to Gavin Hamilton

Did you honestly think it was possible to win the Champions League?
I said at the beginning of the season it would be really tough to get to the Final. I didn't believe it would happen, but we've played really well and we've got better as we've gone along. We've defended really well, scored some magnificent goals and deserved to be in the Final.

At 3-0 down in the Final, could you see a way back?
We played a fantastic team. Milan controlled the game in the first half and there were a few heads down in our dressing-room at half-time. But the manager told us that if we believed in ourselves we could still win and he made some changes. The important thing was to get some respect back, for the fans, and we came back at Milan. In extra-time we were running on empty and probably thinking about penalties.

Can you describe the influence of Rafael Benitez at Liverpool?
Benitez works on the team, shape and tactics every single day. Every training session we work tactically on the team, defensively and offensively. [Gerard] Houllier only used to do that sort of stuff two or three times a week. But Benitez is really keen on working with the team. He works on the small details; training sessions are very long. He wants every player to know their job before they go out. He's very, very tactical.

So he spends a lot of time with individuals?
He makes it clear to every player what job he wants them to do. For Milan, we worked on how to beat them and how to defend against them, how to attack, what we thought their weaknesses were, what we thought their strengths were. We worked on it every single day.

Can it be boring?
No, it's stuff you've got to do. To beat AC Milan, you've got to be prepared 100 per cent, because if you're not, you'll be beaten comfortably. So the manager is really strict. He wanted to make sure that every player was 100 per cent before we went into the Final, because Milan are a magnificent team.

How has Benitez helped you personally?
He's talked to me about my movement, my workrate, he wants me to be clever with my movement. We've watched tapes together. I speak to him every day about what he wants me to do, what he wants me to improve on, what he likes, and I'm sure that will continue.

Can you explain why Liverpool showed such poor domestic form and yet managed to win the Champions League?
There's not an obvious explanation but maybe it's because we've got a lot of foreign players who are prepared better for European football. The Premiership is a lot different, a lot more physical, and foreign players can take a couple of years to adapt. In the same way, English players have to adapt to playing in Europe. But this European Cup victory will give us a lot of confidence and I'm sure next season our League form will improve a lot.

How disappointed were you to finish fifth in the Premier League and miss out on the Champions League?
It was very difficult to take, but now we need to put more pressure on UEFA to make sure we're in it next year. It's called the Champions League and the champions should be allowed to defend it. We were really disappointed not to finish in the top four. Our League form was really disappointing, especially away from home, and we're upset about it and we need to put it right next season.

Fantasy football...the dreams of winning came true

Did the Champions League tire you?
Maybe that was a factor but it shouldn't be an excuse. You've got to have a squad that can cope with both Champions League and Premiership, but I admit that in the domestic games we played straight after European matches, I was feeling tired after about 30 or 40 minutes because I'd given everything really in the Champions League. It does take a while to get over those games because they're really quick and you're playing against the best.

What have Liverpool's Spanish players given to the side?
They're all very good mentally, they train well, they work hard for the team and I don't think we'd have reached the Final without them. Xabi Alonso, Luis Garcia, they're class players. Garcia's scored some great goals for us, Xabi is one of the best passers in Europe and also Fernando Morientes, who came a bit later – he's scored a few important goals for us but he'll be better next season when he has a good pre-season behind him.

How has Xabi Alonso helped you?
He makes it easier not just for me, but the whole team. He's a fantastic passer, he works hard, he's a nice guy on and off the pitch, he doesn't play for himself. Liverpool are a better team with Xabi Alonso.

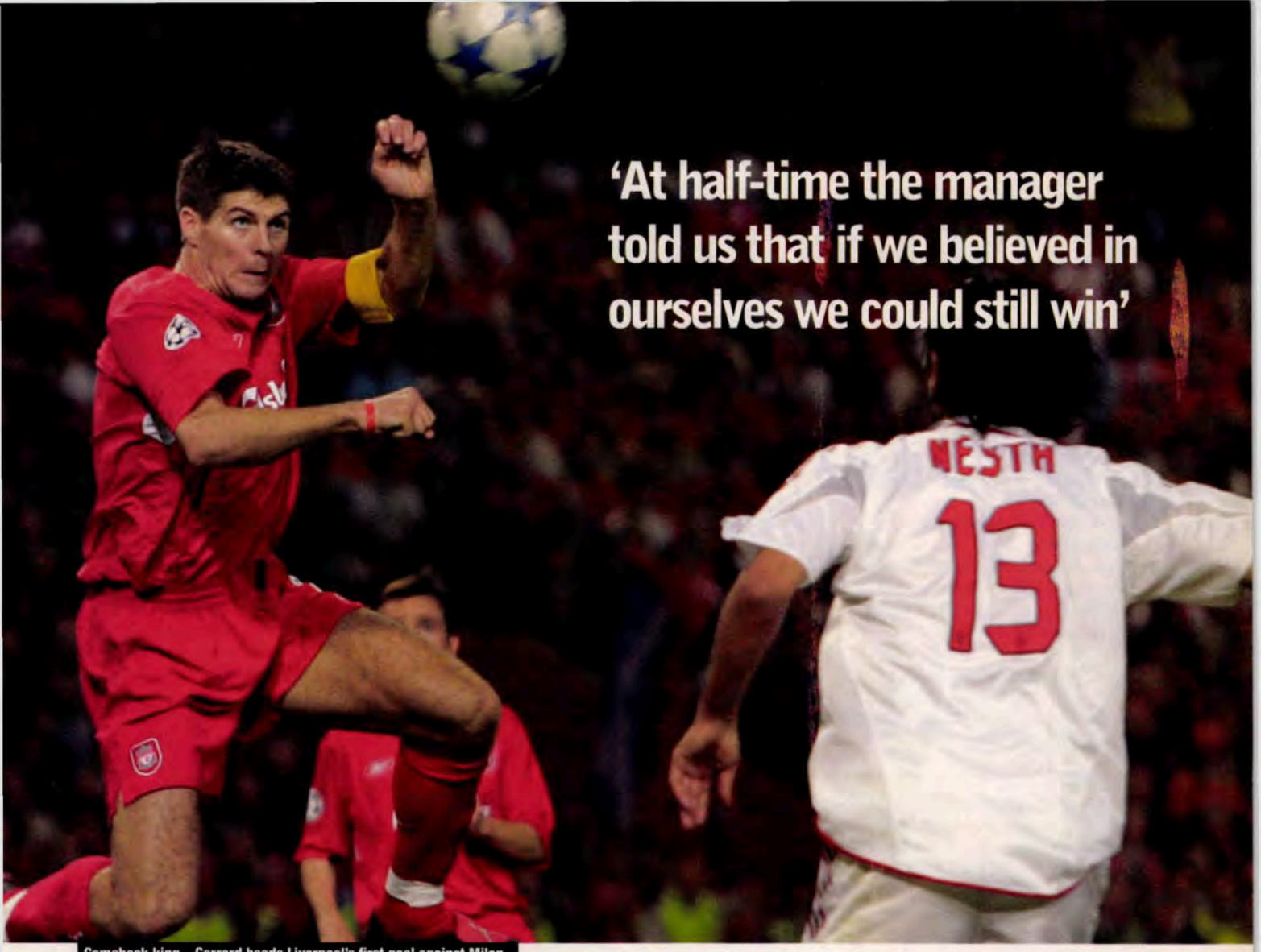
Is it important for the club to have local-born players like yourself and Jamie Carragher?
I'd like to think so, a lot of people talk about it. I'd like to think that the club will always bring on local players. I'd like to think that me and Jamie have helped the foreign lads settle.

How do you relax?
It's difficult. Once I come away from the training ground or away from the game I try to forget about what's happened and spend time with my family and do things to relax, but in the build-up to the Final it was hard. I was thinking about it 24 hours a day and just dreaming of winning it.

How important have the fans been to Liverpool this season?
The fans have played a big part in Europe, they've been really loud, like a 12th man. Against Olympiakos we needed to score three goals in the second half to stay in the competition and without the fans' help we might have gone out of the competition. I wouldn't be sitting here today without them.

Was there a turning point in the competition when you started to believe you might win it?
Early on I didn't think it was possible to go all the way. I didn't think we had the squad. You look at the teams in there: Juventus, AC Milan, Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea. People say that we're not as good as them but we've proved people wrong. We are a good team in Europe. After we scored the late goal against Olympiakos and then we beat Bayer Leverkusen, with each step in the tournament our confidence got bigger. And after the Chelsea game we started to believe we could win it.

You were injured for the quarter-final second leg against Juventus in Turin. Was it tough sitting it out?
Yes, but the boys did brilliantly. I didn't go to Turin, I watched it at home, although I'm not really that good at watching football when I'm injured. I prefer to watch different things. I get too



'At half-time the manager told us that if we believed in ourselves we could still win'

Comeback king...Gerrard heads Liverpool's first goal against Milan

nervous. But it was a fantastic performance. We've had a lot of people criticising the way we've played, that we've been too defensive, too negative, that we didn't deserve to be in the Final. But we knew differently.

Which coach has had the biggest influence on your career?
I've been at the club since I was eight and I've worked with a lot of coaches, also at international level. I try to get a close relationship with my coach so I can work on what I am doing right and what I'm doing wrong. I've taken something from every coach I've worked with. Each one has given me confidence. I've tried to learn as much as I can, and every year I feel I'm getting better and better.

How have you developed your style of play?
It's just happened naturally, I've tried to improve all aspects of my game. I didn't think when I started in football that I'd be a Champions League winner. I didn't think I'd get to this level.

Really?
As a kid, no.

Your father has been very important in your career, hasn't he?
He's watched my every game at amateur and professional level. He's been there ever since I kicked the first ball and he's probably been the most important person. I know I've worked with a lot of good coaches and played with some fantastic players but my dad was the person who bought me my first football boots, he bought me all my balls, my goals, he paid for me to travel here, there and everywhere. Without my dad I wouldn't be sitting here.

Has Liverpool's tradition helped you in European games?
I'm sure when teams meet Liverpool in Europe, they know our history and tradition. They're desperate to beat us because we've done so well in the competition. If a team beats Liverpool, it's a big victory.

The core of the England team is now playing at the highest level, in the Champions League. That must be good for English football.
England's chances at the World Cup are definitely going to be helped by England players playing in the Champions League and doing well. Chelsea have got to two semi-finals, Arsenal have been to the quarters, Man U have done well over the years. Next year, it's important to get as many England players as possible playing in the Champions League; it'll definitely improve the international scene. This competition is going to get more difficult to win each year because teams are going to get stronger. I mean if you look at the teams that were knocked out – Juventus, Chelsea, Arsenal, Man U – they will not have been happy to miss out on the Final. So they're going to buy more players and get stronger.

Have you been surprised that Michael Owen has not played more at Real Madrid?
I expected him to play more. Michael Owen is a world-class player. I love playing with Michael. We had a good relationship. When he went to Real Madrid, I thought he would play a lot more than he has. I think he has done really well – every time he has played he has scored – so I think he should have played more.

But he's up against Raul, Ronaldo...
Sure, it's difficult. Real Madrid have fantastic players all over the pitch so it's difficult to get into the eleven. But when you're playing well and scoring you deserve to play, and sometimes he's played, scored and been left out, which I think is wrong. But it's got nothing to do with me.

Would Michael like to be in your place right now?
I haven't spoken to Michael but he texted me after the Chelsea game to say well done, congratulations, and I'm sure Michael Owen wanted us to win the cup. If it was up to me, I'd have wanted him to be playing with me.

UEFA CUP FINAL

Moscow rule

Keir Radnedge sees CSKA become the first Russian club to win a European trophy

2005 UEFA CUP FINAL
May 18 - Jose Alvalade stadium, Lisbon
Sporting Lisbon 1 (Rogerio 29)
CSKA Moscow 3 (A Berezutsky 54, Zhirkov 65, Vagner Love 73)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 47,085. **Ref:** Poll (Eng)
Sporting (4-4-2):
Ricardo - Miguel Garcia, Enakarhire, Beto, Tello - Rogerio (Douala 79), Rochemback, Joao Moutinho (Hugo Viana 87), Pedro Barbosa - Sa Pinto (Niculae 72), Liedson.
CSKA (3-4-1-2):
Akinfeev - V Berezutsky, Ignashevich, A Berezutsky - Odiah, Aldonin (Gusev 86), Rahimic, Zhirkov - Daniel Carvalho (Semberas 82) - Olic (Krasic 67), Vagner Love.

SUSPICION LINGERS ON that Roman Abramovich directed his oil corporation, Sibneft, towards sponsorship of CSKA Moscow to defuse criticism from Russia that his football charity should have begun at home rather than in west London. True or false, his £14million-a-year investment returned a European dividend far sooner than his rather more extravagant outlay at Chelsea and, to be honest, far sooner than expected.

When the former army club parachuted into the UEFA Cup having finished third behind Chelsea, ironically, and FC Porto in Champions League Group H it was not considered the springboard to international fame and fortune. The January departures of Czech playmaker Jiri Jarosik to Chelsea and winger Sergei Semak to Paris Saint-Germain appeared further admissions of impending failure.

It may be, then, that CSKA's UEFA Cup Final victory over Sporting Lisbon – and in the Portuguese club's own stadium – says more about the credibility crisis afflicting the UEFA Cup than it does about the strength of Russian football. After all, CSKA are the first Russian team to win a European trophy and only the second to reach a Final – 33 years after Dinamo Moscow lost to Rangers in a notorious Cup-winners Cup decider.

Re-think required

UEFA now has to do more serious thinking about its secondary club event. The patternless nature of the group stage, introduced this year, only exacerbated the unease prompted by the longer established system of allowing Champions League losers to enter the competition halfway through.

A radical answer would be to revive the Cup-winners Cup; that would at least encourage a competitive redevelopment at domestic level. Domestic cups in England, France, Spain and Germany cruise along happily enough, but replacing the carrot of a specific European competition for cup winners with a patronising UEFA Cup slot has undermined shaky cup competitions in many other countries.

Not that Russian state President Vladimir Putin was concerned as he welcomed the CSKA squad, 3-1 victors over Sporting, to a reception at his villa outside Moscow. Not that it bothered the regional government in Ossetia, which named a street after coach Valeri Gazzayev, the local boy made good.

The gloom of the Sporting camp and fans was in stark contrast to such celebrations. The team had collapsed on home soil against CSKA after taking the lead, and the defeat came just four days after they lost a crucial League derby, 1-0, away to Benfica. Sporting then lost their last faint hopes of winning the domestic championship after crashing 4-2 at home to Nacional the following Sunday.

The UEFA Cup Final was decided by a piece of end-to-end drama in the 73rd minute. With CSKA leading 2-1, Sporting's Rodrigo Tello saw his cross-shot kept out by the knee of team-mate Rogerio. The ball deflected into the hands of fallen keeper Igor Akinfeev, who, on rising to his feet, spotted the chance to launch a counter-attack. He sent Daniel Carvalho racing away to cross towards Vagner Love, who converted. Suddenly, Sporting were 3-1 down instead of being level.

Goalkeeper Ricardo, shoot-out hero in the very same goal against England in the Euro 2004 quarter-finals, was partly to blame. He was slow to read Carvalho's cross and too late to reach the ball when he did totter from goal. Vagner Love was thus presented with the freedom to make amends for an earlier finishing failure.

When Rogerio fired Sporting ahead in the 29th minute, their fans chanted "Brazil, Brazil!" in celebration of the scorer. But it was CSKA's two Brazilians who had the last word.

The Final – tidily refereed by England's Graham Poll – was more about entertainment than quality. Sporting, whose victims had included Middlesbrough and Newcastle, played archetypal Portuguese football: intelligent in midfield, their nimble inter-passing engineered by Fabio Rochemback and Joao Moutinho, but clueless when reaching the penalty box.

The hosts forced five corners in the first 10 minutes yet created not one single first-half opening for their own Brazilian, Liedson, the Portuguese League top scorer. Thus it was courtesy only of Rogerio's 25-yard effort that they led at the interval. Carvalho even had an inadvertent hand in that goal, lazily failing to control an interception to Rochemback's assist.

CSKA had even fashioned the better openings, despite being overrun in midfield. In the 13th minute Alexei Berezutsky headed just wide from Carvalho's right-wing free-kick. Then, just before the interval, Vagner Love sliced horribly wide with only Ricardo to beat. Carvalho, a rare appropriate choice as man of the match, said later: "At half-time we were ashamed of the way we had played. It wasn't the real CSKA. We decided to make some changes so at least if we lost we would go down with honour."

Cheers to jeers

Defeat was never likely, however, once Berezutsky had equalised from another of Carvalho's right-wing free-kicks in the 54th minute. As Sporting floundered, and the cheers turned to jeers, so Carvalho set up Yuri Zhirkov to slip a shot through Ricardo's legs in the 65th minute before Vagner Love's coup de grace.

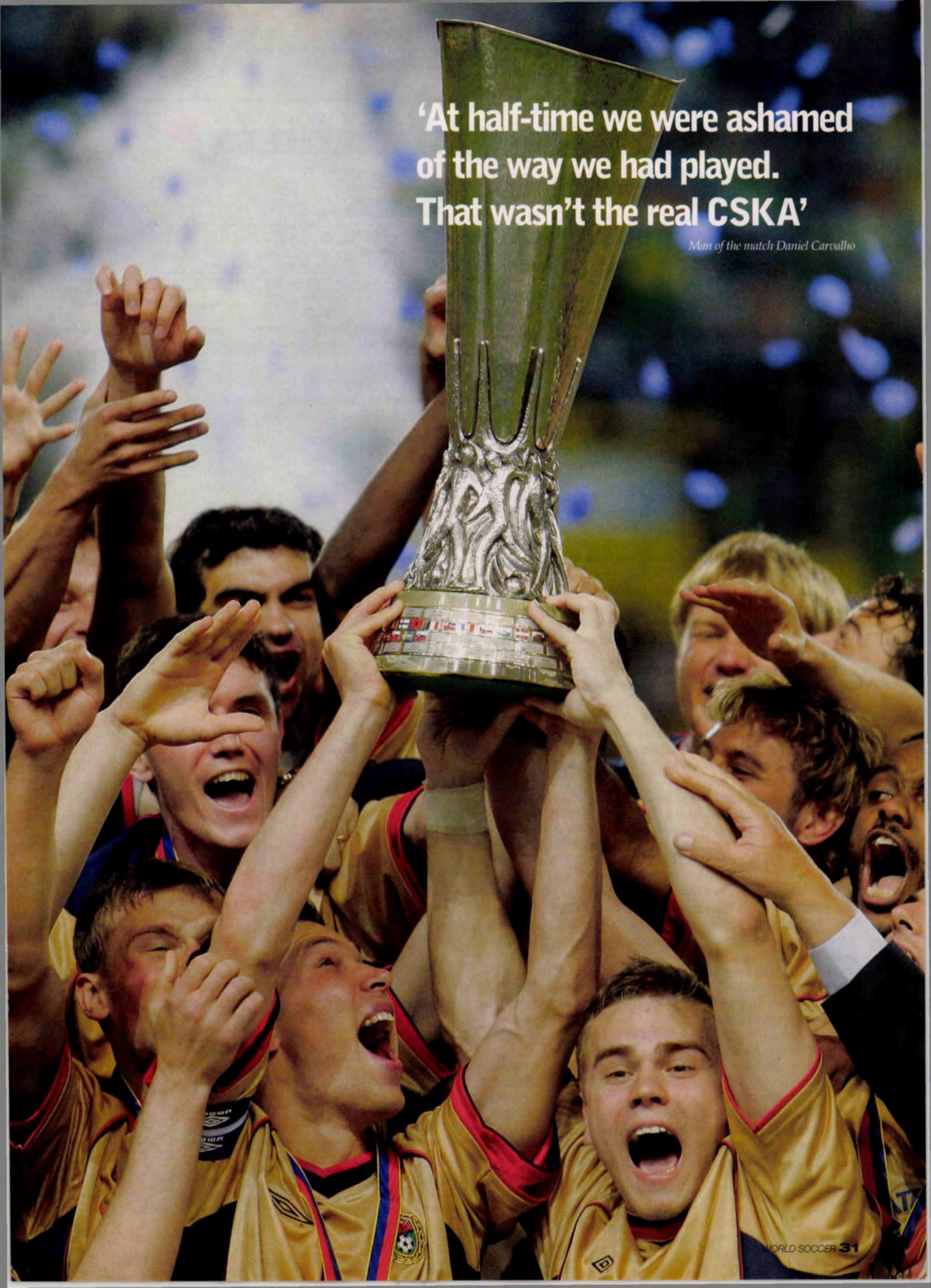
Suddenly the noise in the stadium was emanating only from some 2,000 CSKA fans. "Russian football will never be the same again," trumpeted Russian daily *Sport-Express* as more than 2,000 supporters prepared to welcome the team home at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport the next day. Media and the masses envisaged greater feats to come, though recent history is equivocal. Certainly, Porto followed up their 2003 UEFA Cup success by winning the Champions League the next year, but last year's UEFA Cup winners, Valencia, have proved a fading force.

As for Sporting, a season promising a grand climax is now considered a disaster. Yet they came within 36 minutes of emulating their Cup-winners Cup victory of 1964.

Coach Jose Peseiro, naturally, shouldered most of the blame for the Final defeat, largely for team selection. It was unlucky for him that Chilean striker Mauricio Pinilla tore knee ligaments in training on the eve of the Final. But Peseiro erred by omitting defensive midfielder Custodio and skipper and left-back Rui Jorge in order to try to bolster his attack. "The saddest day of my career," Rui Jorge called it – and he meant being dropped, not the defeat.

Sporting, who finished only third in the Portuguese title race, will be back up in the Champions League qualifiers next season, but whether Liedson will be leading their line is open to question. The former supermarket shelf-stacker was a hero a week before the Final with his top-scoring 25 goals in the League and nine in the UEFA Cup. But his absence through suspension was seen as a major factor in the defeat by Benfica and his failure to test Akinfeev made him a scapegoat against CSKA.

Big-spending Corinthians of Sao Paulo had two directors at the UEFA Cup Final, poised to launch a transfer inquiry. They may find Sporting eager to listen. On the other hand, they may have changed their minds. Still, Russian clubs have learned to love Brazilian strikers – as Sporting found to their cost.



'At half-time we were ashamed of the way we had played. That wasn't the real CSKA'

Man of the match Daniel Carvalho

SIX OF THE BEST LEAGUE CHAMPIONS

1 Deco

Barcelona's heartbeat

FACT FILE

Club Barcelona (Spa)
Country Portugal
Born August 27, 1977, in Sao Bernardo do Campo, Brazil
Previous clubs Nacional Sao Paulo (Bra), Corinthians (Bra), Alverca, Salgueiros, FC Porto
International debut March 2003, v Brazil
International caps 27 (2 goals)
Honours UEFA Cup 2003 (FC Porto); Champions League 2004 (FC Porto); Portuguese League 1999, 2003, 2004; Portuguese Cup 2000, 2001, 2003; Spanish League 2005

THE 2004-05 SEASON WILL be remembered in Spain as Samuel Eto'o's year, his transfer to Barcelona and very public rejection of Real Madrid a symbol of the power shift in domestic football. But while the Cameroon striker was Camp Nou's top scorer, and much as Ronaldinho remains Barca's fantasy footballer, with Carles Puyol the soul of the club, one man stands above them all – metaphorically speaking, that is.

He may be tiny, but that man is Anderson Luis de Souza – Deco to you, me and the uncle who named him. He has been Barcelona's heartbeat this season, and that despite the long queue of commentators wondering why the Catalans bothered signing him last summer. Wasn't the arrival of a creative, ball-playing midfielder going to make Barca a case of too many cooks?, they asked.

The answer has been an emphatic no. Many assumed that the Brazil-born Portuguese would tread on the toes of Ronaldinho or Xavi or both. He has not. Rather, he has been the perfect accompaniment to them.

Others complained that Barca would end up with a soft underbelly. They have not – far from it.

For the many who considered Deco a lightweight luxury, unwilling to work, reluctant to make tackles, the retort has been obvious from the very start – go and watch him play. The charge simply has not stood up, with even those who rated him admitting their surprise at his effort and endeavour, at the fact that he has committed more fouls (and suffered more), picked up more yellow cards (13) and won the ball more (except for centre-back Puyol) than anyone else at the club. In short, at the central role he has played defensively as well as creatively.

As Barcelona legend Johan Cruyff put it in his end-of-term report: "Deco means the whole team. Work, sacrifice, goals, technical ability. When he arrived, people maybe wondered whether he could really fit in and whether his position was already taken up by Xavi, but when the moment of truth arrived, Deco pulverised all expectations. Without doubt he has been, with Samuel Eto'o, the player who has made Barcelona different this year."

Praise indeed – and justified too. Deco's touch, deftness, vision and unusual movement, his whole body shifting with the ball, fused with an admirable tactical awareness and that willingness to get involved, to break down opposition attacks (especially high up the pitch), have made him the complete midfielder.

Deco has provided nine assists, scored eight goals and played a role of incalculable importance in the middle of midfield. Everything Barca do goes through him; any team that wants to beat them must try to go through him too. It has proved a near impossible task and Barcelona, an eminently attacking team, have somehow conceded fewer goals than any other side in La Liga. Much of that is about Deco.

Before Barcelona travelled to the Bernabeu towards the end of the season, Real Madrid defender Ivan Helguera, eschewing careful cliches, insisted that Deco was definitely Barcelona's most important player. Helguera believed that Barca would really miss the suspended midfielder – and he was right. It was no coincidence that the visitors were defeated 4-2 without him.

Nor was it a coincidence that when Barca all but tied up the League with a superb 2-0 win in Valencia, Deco was the man who pulled the strings, dominating the game, leading them to victory. After all, he has done just that all season long. Champions don't come any more worthy.

Sid Lowe

No luxury...Deco has proved he can defend as well as attack

2 DaMarcus Beasley

American wide man cutting it with PSV

EX-US VICE-PRESIDENT Dan Quayle, late Hollywood movie star Carole Lombard and *Cheers* actress Shelley Long are not the only famous names to have once called Fort Wayne, Indiana, home. The state's second city has also given us 'Run DMB', alias 23-year-old USA and PSV Eindhoven wide midfielder DaMarcus Beasley.

Europe was always going to be his next port of call after impressing with his exciting, incisive wing play at the 2002 World Cup. Since joining PSV last summer in a £1.4million deal, he has risen to the challenge. Beasley made a telling contribution to a side which again ruled the roost in the Dutch Eredivisie and emerged as the surprise package of this season's Champions League, reaching the semi-finals. So much for those critics who felt he might be a little lightweight for the rigours of the European game. Beasley has been the model emigre, unfazed by his new footballing and cultural parameters and keen to learn from experienced PSV coach Guus Hiddink.

The American's achievements with PSV stand in marked contrast to the recent travails at Bayer Leverkusen of his US national team attacking partner Landon Donovan. He quit Germany for good in March to return to California following two abortive spells at the Rhineland club. In truth, Donovan rarely looked like establishing himself in the Bundesliga. He often gave the impression he was wishing he was somewhere else, while the Bayer coaching staff tended to view his delicate skills as a luxury they could well do without.

The Beasley-PSV union was constructed on much firmer ground. His assimilation was no doubt helped by the fact that every Dutchman speaks word-perfect English, meaning Beasley had no trouble communicating in the dressing-room. He was quickly adopted by his new team-mates, with skipper Mark Van Bommel affectionately christening him 'McDonald's'.

Basketball reigns supreme in Indiana and it is the dream of most athletically-inclined youngsters there to make it all the way to the NBA. But from the moment Beasley's father Henry gave him a soccer ball as an infant, there was only one sport for him.

Regarded as one of the best players in the country while a schoolboy at South Side High in Fort Wayne, Beasley joined Major League Soccer club Los Angeles Galaxy as a 16-year-old in 1999. But he never played in LA and moved to Chicago Fire a year later. He starred in the Windy City for the next five years, scoring 14 goals in 97 League appearances, before PSV came calling.

"I've got what I was dreaming of as a kid," says Beasley, whose elder brother Jamar is also a footballer, with Kansas City Comets of the American indoor league. "I've competed in the World Cup and the Champions League and I play for a top European club. As a pro soccer player, Europe is the place to be. The passion is all around. It's crazy. Fans live for their club, it's very tough for them when we lose. It's great to be part of this scene."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club	PSV Eindhoven (Hol)
Country	United States
Born	May 24, 1982, in Fort Wayne
Previous clubs	Los Angeles Galaxy, Chicago Fire
International debut	January 2001, v China
International caps	42 (8 goals)
Honours	Dutch League 2005

Living the Euro dream...DaMarcus Beasley

SIX OF THE BEST LEAGUE CHAMPIONS

Change of fortune...Balaban

3 Bosko Balaban

Flop in England, top in Brugge

CROAT STRIKER Bosko Balaban was labelled a £6million misfit during a thoroughly depressing two years with Aston Villa. He featured in only a handful of games and did not manage a single goal. Clearly, the Flemish fields of Club Brugge have been much more to his liking, playing a key role as the *Blauw en Zwart* (Blue and Blacks) dominated the 2004-05 Belgian championship.

All sorts of reasons have been advanced to explain why Balaban flopped in England – homesickness, a lack of application in training, differences of opinion with Villa managers John Gregory and Graham Taylor. But the bottom line was that the move to the Premiership was an unmitigated disaster for a youngster who had been so sharp at Dinamo Zagreb and had scored six goals in his first seven games for Croatia.

Balaban's luck did not immediately improve on joining Brugge on a free transfer in February 2004. Not long after arriving, he damaged knee ligaments and spent the next three months on the sidelines. However, the tide turned at the start of this season. A new slim-line Balaban announced his intentions with four goals in Brugge's 6-0 aggregate victory over Lokomotiv Plovdiv in the second qualifying round of the Champions League, and his form in the Belgian League proved equally impressive.

Balaban was a sensation, allying pace, power, finishing (11 goals in 23 starts) and creativity. This was not the lost soul of Villa Park, more the front man once coveted by Barcelona, Fiorentina and Marseille. "We knew of Bosko's problems in England but he settled straight away," said Brugge midfielder Philippe Clement. "Our style of play suits him too. He needs space to run into, and that's what our 4-3-3 creates."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club	Club Brugge (Blg)
Country	Croatia
Born	October 15, 1978, in Rijeka
Previous clubs	NK Rijeka, Dinamo Zagreb, Aston Villa (Eng)
International debut	August 2000, v Slovakia
International caps	18 (6 goals)
Honours	Croat League 2003; Belgian League 2005

4 Martin Demichelis

Argentinian enforcer giving Bayern a defensive shield

PATIENCE CAN BE a virtue. Ask German champions Bayern Munich and their Argentinian central defender/midfielder Martin Demichelis.

Only six months ago, Demichelis seemed on the brink of calling in the divorce lawyers. 'Micho', bought from River Plate for £3million in summer 2003, was unable to hold down a regular berth at the heart of the Bavarian back line. Frustrated with the life of a bench-warmer, he expressed a desire to return home or join Espanyol in Spain.

Bayern were tempted to cut their losses. Demichelis had not proved the defensive bulwark they had envisaged, and the words of River president Jose Maria Aguilar – "Demichelis reminds me of a Beckenbauer" – now had a hollow ring.

But during the winter break, Bayern coach Felix Magath came to the conclusion that his team would be better served by playing a hard-hitting enforcer in front of the back four. After toying with the idea of using Owen Hargreaves or Torsten Frings in the position, he handed Demichelis the role when the Bundesliga restarted in late January.

A wise move. He turned out to be one of Bayern's most effective players during the second half of the season, strong in the tackle and in the air, mobile and an excellent reader of the game, enabling the multi-talented Michael Ballack to push forward more.

"For me, Martin was one of the biggest, most pleasant surprises of the season," said Magath after Bayern had clinched their 19th Bundesliga title. "He was superb and brought much-needed stability to our play."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club	Bayern Munich (Ger)
Country	Argentina
Born	December 12, 1980, in Buenos Aires
Previous clubs	Renato Cesarini, River Plate
Honours	Argentinian closing championship 2003; German League 2005

Pleasant surprise...Demichelis

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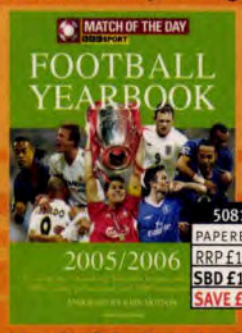

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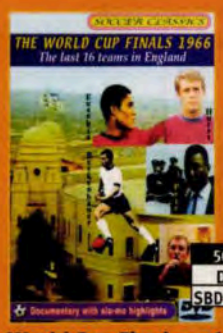

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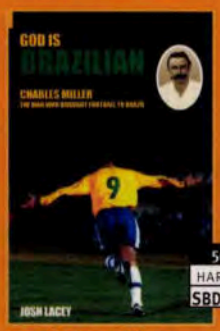

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SIX OF THE BEST LEAGUE CHAMPIONS

Unsung hero...Malouda

5 Florent Malouda

Top dog in Lyon's midfield

LYON MIDFIELDER Florent Malouda likes to spend much of his spare time putting his pet pooch through its paces at dog training school, and he himself was a candidate for the title of best in show in the 2004-05 French championship.

As Lyon marched relentlessly to their fourth straight League crown, it was ironic that the 24-year-old's contribution frequently went unrecognised. The media tended to focus on the brilliance of Michael Essien and Juninho in midfield, and Sidney Govou and Sylvain Wiltord up front, but make no mistake, 'Flo' is just as important to the winning machine that is Olympique Lyonnais.

Creatively, the French Guianan is worth at least three Michelin stars. He has the ability to leave defenders for dead with a drop of the shoulder or instant change of direction, his crosses are excellent, particularly those low, firm centres that curl away from the opposing keeper, and he is also a supreme counter-attacker, lightning quick over the ground and extremely clever in his neat one-touch approach play.

Malouda, a £2.8million signing from Breton club Guingamp two years ago, has yet more strings to his bow. He weighs in with his fair share of goals – in keeping with someone who began his professional career as a front-runner with Chateauroux (1996-2000) – and also gets stuck in when it comes to defensive duties. Endurance, athleticism and bite in the tackle are all part of his game, and he has on occasion filled in successfully at full-back.

Malouda won his first senior French cap last autumn in a friendly with Poland. With national coach Raymond Domenech often singing his praises, there should be many more to come.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club	Lyon
Country	France
Born	June 13, 1980, in Cayenne, French Guiana
Previous clubs	Chateauroux, Guingamp
International debut	November 2004, v Poland
International caps	3 (0 goals)
Honours	French League 2004, 2005

6 Steffen Hofmann

German midfield general commanding Rapid Wien

THREE YEARS AGO Rapid Wien finished only eighth out of 10 in the Austrian top division, when coached by former Germany great Lothar Matthaus – but this season the German connection has come up trumps for the Viennese in the shape of playmaker Steffen Hofmann.

Rapid's first domestic title since 1996 was shaped by the tactical philosophy of coach Jozef Hickersberger, the resolute defending of Martin Hiden and the class of midfielders Andreas Ivanschitz and Sebastian Martinez. But the binding ingredient was supplied by Hofmann.

The 24-year-old is a classic midfield general, with poise, vision, passing ability and no little imagination. He was the conduit through which most of Rapid's attacks flowed and also found the time to score eight goals, serve as in-house free-kick specialist and skipper the side.

Hofmann's decision three years ago to swap Bayern Munich's amateur side for Rapid has paid off handsomely. If he had stayed with Bayern, it is debatable whether he would have broken into the professional ranks. But in the less pressurised atmosphere of the Austrian top flight, he has flourished, so much so that he was voted the country's Player of the Year for 2004.

But will he be playing for Rapid next season? He has been quoted as saying he has gone as far as he can with Rapid, while Stuttgart, Borussia Dortmund and Wolfsburg are chasing him.

Hofmann also needs to decide where his international future lies. Married to a Viennese girl, he has not ruled out taking Austrian citizenship, but Germany's pull might be too great, especially with national coach Jurgen Klinsmann said to be watching him closely.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club	Rapid Wien (Aut)
Country	Germany
Born	September 9, 1980, in Wurzburg
Previous clubs	FC Kirchheim, Wurzburger FV, Bayern Munich amateurs
Honours	Austrian League 2005

Decisions to make...Hofmann

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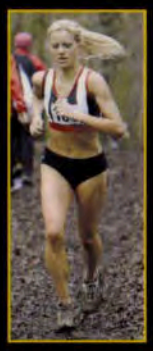

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Cashing in

Alberto Gilardino, scorer of 23 Serie A goals in each of the past two seasons, is in demand. Paddy Agnew reports

BEFORE THE SUMMER is out, the chances are that you will have heard a lot about Alberto Gilardino, the player almost certain to be the hottest property on the Italian transfer market. Twelve months from now, you may again be hearing of Gilardino as he leads the Italian attack at the World Cup finals.

Mind you, had public opinion and various critics had their way last summer, Gilardino would have already made his first appearance at a major international tournament, Euro 2004. At 21 years of age, Gilardino had just completed a brilliant season, scoring 23 goals for Parma. Used only sparingly as a reserve for Brazilian striker Adriano in the first half of the season, the youngster burst into the limelight after Adriano was sold to Inter in January 2004. Gilardino's 17 goals in the second half of the season, including four on the last day against Udinese, made it inevitable that he would become the focus of popular acclaim with regard to the squad for Portugal.

But then national coach Giovanni Trapattoni claimed he would not be swayed by the emotive impact of a player who "has only really played in the last three months of the season". He added that he had opted for Roma striker Antonio Cassano because "he is more versatile, more creative and more experienced" than Gilardino.

Trapattoni's decision was understandable. After all, at the time Gilardino was still uncapped at senior level. But the coach did say that the youngster's time would come, and he was proved right sooner rather than later. Marcello Lippi, who succeeded Trapattoni following Italy's premature exit from Euro 2004, has rung the changes in the squad, and Gilardino heads the new wave of internationals.

The Parma striker had shown his abilities on the international stage last summer when helping Italy win the European Under-21 Championship and a bronze medal at the Athens Olympics. Lippi handed him his first senior cap in February against Russia – he scored in a 2-0 win after coming off the bench – and he is now so firmly established at the centre of the *Azzurri* attack that experienced players such as Alessandro Del Piero, Filippo Inzaghi, Vincenzo Montella and Christian Vieri will all struggle to make the squad for Germany 2006.

In the season just gone, the Parma striker confirmed all the huge promise shown in 2003-04. Playing in a greatly weakened side which only avoided automatic relegation on the last day, Gilardino still scored 23 Serie A goals, the same tally as the previous term. But the big surprise was that he was still at Parma at all.

Such was Gilardino's white-hot status in summer 2004 that most of us expected him to leave Parma, and for a huge price. But the club believed they would be able to get even more for him in a year.

The gamble would appear to have worked out well. Last summer, Gilardino was valued at £13.5million; by May this year Parma managing director Luca Baraldi was boldly announcing that the price tag on his star player was now £34m. Even if Baraldi's valuation is probably best seen as the opening move in a complex transfer deal rather than a definitive 'take it or leave it' option, it seems obvious that, in the end, Parma will sell the player for well over last summer's valuation.

'Parma need the money and I'll be happy if my sale helps their situation'

Baraldi's comments, too, were probably intended for the ears of Milan, Juventus and Internazionale as well as Chelsea, Manchester United and Real Madrid from outside Italy. Parma coach Pietro Carmignani assured us in mid-May that "three Italian and three foreign clubs" are interested in buying Gilardino. While he did not name the clubs, some of the above six are certain to be in the market for the player.

Lest anyone got scared off by the price tag,

EUROPE'S MOST WANTED

The rising stars coveted by the continent's biggest clubs

Much sought after...Michael Essien

APART FROM Alberto Gilardino, the player being linked with more of Europe's elite clubs than any other is Lyon midfielder **Michael Essien**. The Ghanaian was outstanding for the French champions in the past 12 months, demonstrating his versatility by filling a number of defensive and midfield positions.

Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas has insisted that only striker **Sidney Govou** is for sale, with Juventus and Arsenal leading the chase, but that has not stopped Essien regularly being mentioned in connection with Manchester United, Chelsea and Juventus, among others. Fellow midfielder **Mahamadou Diarra** has also been linked with Premiership and Serie A clubs.

Other French starlets attracting attention from abroad include Paris Saint-Germain midfielder **Modeste Mbami**, Monaco full-back **Patrice Evra**, Bordeaux midfielder **Rio Mavuba**, Lens forward **Olivier Thomert** and Nantes goalkeeper **Mickael Landreau**.

Within France, Sochaux midfielder **Jeremy Mathieu**, Lille's **Mathieu Bodmer** and **Jeremy Toulalan** of Nantes have all been linked with Lyon, while there is talk of Arsenal youngster **Jeremie Aliadiere** returning home, to PSG.

In Italy, Inter's Brazilian striker **Adriano** is likely to stay in Milan, barring an astronomical bid from Chelsea. Surprise Champions League qualifiers Udinese face a struggle to hold on to their best players – forward **David Di Michele**, Chilean playmaker **David Pizarro** and keeper **Morgan De Sanctis** – having already lost Czech midfielder Marek Jankulovski to Milan.

Similarly, Lecce will do well to keep Argentinian midfielder **Cristian Ledesma** and Serb striker **Mirko Vucinic**. Other targets include Cagliari's Italian international striker **Mauro Esposito** and Serie A top scorer **Cristiano Lucarelli** of Livorno.

In Spain, young Sevilla defender **Sergio Ramos** is being closely monitored by Real Madrid, despite a buyout clause set at £21million. Atletico Madrid's **Pablo Ibanez** may move after a stunning first season in the Spanish capital, having joined from Albacete.

Betis winger **Joaquin** and Atletico striker **Fernando Torres** remain the source of constant speculation in the Spanish press, who also continue to link Brazilian **Robinho** with a move from Santos to Real Madrid. But Dutch reports claim Robinho will sign for PSV, with a view to an eventual move to Chelsea.

In England, most of the speculation about young players has focused on those at the three clubs relegated from the Premier League. **Andy Johnson**, the

Gilardino himself spoke up with some reassuring words for prospective buyers, telling *La Stampa*: "I've told Mr Baraldi that I'm not too sure if clubs will want to spend such a high sum on me. Parma have named a price but now the negotiations can begin and, in the end, Parma will probably sell me for less than 50 million [euros; £34m]."

In that same interview, Gilardino admitted that there was little possibility of his staying another season at cash-strapped Parma. "They need the money and I'm happy that my sale could help Parma's financial situation," he said. "I'm also happy to make the big jump, to have the possibility of playing in a big team."

Milan lead chase

The smart money says that Milan are in the driving seat to land the striker. In the wake of their Champions League Final disappointment, they may well want to flex muscle and send an important signal to rivals at home and abroad by landing Gilardino. The player himself has made no secret of his interest in playing for Milan.

All in all, the 2005-06 season could be a critical one for Gilardino. By next summer, he could find himself weighed down by the hopes of 56 million Italians. He himself has no doubts about his major seasonal objective: "I really hope to play in the World Cup finals. I want to be there, be in the squad. I know I am still relatively young but I hope to be ready for it."

leading English scorer in the top flight in 2004-05, has pledged to stay with Crystal Palace, but the club will still be open to offers. Meanwhile, Palace's highly promising winger **Wayne Routledge** is out of contract and being strongly linked with Tottenham. Southampton's beanpole striker **Peter Crouch** is unlikely to hang around in the Championship, while Norwich keeper **Robert Green** will move on to boost his international prospects.

In Germany, Brazilian left-back **Dede** is set to leave Borussia Dortmund, while Stuttgart's talented Belorussian midfielder **Alexander Hleb** has been linked with Arsenal and Liverpool. Others likely to move include Stuttgart striker **Kevin Kuranyi** (Schalke or Spain), Bremen's French defender **Valerien Ismael** (Bayern Munich or PSG) and Wolfsburg's Argentinian star **Andres D'Alessandro** (Spain).

Hefty price tag...Gilardino has been valued at £34m

One for

Luis Figo talks to Sid Lowe ahead of his

How would you define Real Madrid's season?
Frustrating. It's frustrating to spend the entire year working only to get to the end without having achieved objectives, without winning anything.

Why have Madrid finished the season empty-handed?
Because Barcelona have been the most consistent team in Spain. During the majority of the year, Barca have played the best football, whereas it's been an atypical season for us. We've had three coaches and we've had some good runs but each time we drew that little bit closer to Barcelona we slipped up again. We were never able to get close enough for them to really feel under pressure. They've had a comfortable cushion all year, apart from the last few games, when there's always a bit more anxiety to win. Eleven points, nine points…that gives you the ability to make mistakes, whereas the teams coming up behind can't allow themselves any slip-ups.

Why have Barca been the better side? What have their players said to you?
There aren't many players left from my time there so I'm not sure, but it's six years since they won the League, there are lots of players who've never won anything and I think that hunger for titles has been important.

Madrid have won nothing for a second successive season. Is it the end of an era?
People write things like that because this is a world of vested interests and it helps them sell papers. But I think cycles, eras, come and go. You might win something one year and nothing the next but that doesn't mean that one year is an era and the next isn't. The reality is that we haven't won anything for two years and people justify that in the way they want, the way that suits them to sell. I think all this business about the end of an era is very subjective.

Yes, but it's not just the press selling certain notions, is it? Real Madrid as a club have their own vested interests and an image to sell too.
Of course they do.

And if Madrid, as a club, tries to sell itself as the greatest in the world, two years without winning anything is a big deal.
Absolutely. In the world of football there are lots of clubs who have won nothing for two years but at this club everything is so much more transcendental, it has another dimension. In football only one team can win and in Spain there have been some very good teams over the last

the road

expected departure from Real Madrid

few years, all with the same objectives. But it is also true that we haven't been consistent enough in key moments.

Do Madrid lack stability? Has the fact that you have had three coaches been a factor this year?
Yes, it's influenced things, of course it has. It's also a sign that things aren't going well. It's important to find a style and work on it, to make sure the team is in good physical shape and, above all, that it has a system. That enables

Controversial exit...Camacho

you to play better – and if you play better, you have a better chance of winning.

What happened with your first coach, Jose Antonio Camacho? Publicly, the blame was laid on the players, and yet he hinted at other problems when he quit. It seems as if there's something else we don't know about.
Yes, but those are things that are down to the person who made the decision [Camacho] to talk about. He'll have his reasons but he hasn't wanted to reveal them. Only he can say why he left; for us, well, that's that. The decision caught me by surprise because I was injured, didn't travel to Espanyol and the following morning I was training on my own when he told people. He'd been with us such a short time.

If the players were not to blame why don't they speak out?
Whenever you get the blame for something and you don't know why, it doesn't sit well because you know it's not your fault. People wonder about the real reason the coach left...but, I repeat, only he can say.

Is Madrid's squad too small and too old?
We fought all the way to the end. If we had been a small or old squad I don't think we could have done that.

You say it's been a frustrating year for Madrid. What about for you personally?
My season's been up and down because for the last month and a half I haven't played. I think I had a good season and then after the Juventus game [Champions League second round] things changed completely. I stopped being an option for the team. No one has explained why, and I haven't asked, but from that moment on I didn't play. The rest of the season wasn't good at all for me.

It must have come as quite a surprise, especially being dropped in the week of the *clasico* against Barcelona, with everything that facing Barca means to you.
Yes, of course. Going from playing every game to not playing at all without any kind of reason given is a surprise.

Shouldn't someone have explained why you were being left out?
Explain as such, no. I don't ask for an explanation when I play so I can't when I don't play, but I could at least have been told. I think I deserved that.

Since then, even when there have been players out and you have been the logical replacement, you've been left on the bench. Does that make you think there's more to it than football?
It makes you think lots of things. To go from playing every game to not even being on the shortlist, well...I know perfectly well why I got dropped but right now is not the time to make that public or cause problems. I respect people's opinions, everyone acts in the way that they think they should, but I don't think they have behaved in the best way towards me because I have never hidden here, I have always done what they asked of me and the least I deserved was for them to tell me that I wasn't going to play. I would have liked them to have at least shown their faces and been honest, like I have been.

Do you consider yourself a victim of presidential policy rather than of a coach's decision?

MOVING ON

Big names preparing to switch sides

LUIS FIGO IS NOT the only Real Madrid player being linked with a move away from the Bernabeu this summer. **Guti** recently admitted that he may have played his last game for the club. "It is better for everyone if I leave," he said. "I am mad because I could have given Real much more than I did. I'm 28, it's time I played more."

Team-mate **Michael Owen** has been unable to claim a regular starting position, despite scoring 13 League goals, most of them as a substitute, and retains many admirers back in England.

Back to Holland?...Kezman

At Owen's former club, Liverpool, a clutch of players could be leaving, despite the fact some of them starred in the Champions League Final. **Jerzy Dudek**, **Vladimir Smicer** and **Igor Biscan** are all out of contract, while **Milan Baros** has long been primed for the exit.

Down the M62 at Manchester United, **Roy Carroll** has paid the price for goalkeeping inconsistencies and has not had his contract renewed. **Scott Parker** is keen to leave champions Chelsea after limited first-team chances while **Mateja Kezman** may return to PSV Eindhoven.

At Arsenal, **Jose Antonio Reyes** looks likely to return to Spain, and **Robert Pires** has been strongly linked with Lyon. **Patrick Kluivert** has been released by Newcastle after a disappointing season.

Georgian defender **Kakha Kaladze** has accepted the need to move on from Champions League finalists Milan, possibly to Chelsea as a makeweight in a deal to convert Hernan Crespo's loan to a permanent transfer. French midfielder **Vikash Dhorasoo** is reportedly close to a return home, to Paris Saint-Germain.

At Juventus, the future of **Alessandro Del Piero** is in question, with the forward unhappy at being dropped by coach Fabio Capello and seeking assurances about next season. Long-serving Uruguayan defender **Paolo Montero** is set to leave, possibly for Spain, with Bayern Munich's **Robert Kovac** touted as his replacement.

Marco Di Vaio, **Stefano Fiore** and **Bernardo Corradi** could all be returning to Italy after their unhappy sojourn at Valencia. **Alberto Luque** is set to move on from Deportivo La Coruna, while the future of Barcelona's long-term loanees **Juan Roman Riquelme** (Villarreal) and **Javier Saviola** (Monaco) remains uncertain.

In Germany, **Tomas Rosicky** and **Jan Koller** have been linked with moves from financially-troubled Borussia Dortmund. At Bayern, a clearout is likely, with **Sammy Kuffour**, **Sebastian Deisler** and **Tobias Rau** joining Kovac in the departure lounge.

Giving his all...Figo beats Bilbao's Aranzubia

Well...[starts laughing]...I'll withhold my opinion there. This isn't the moment to go public. That moment will arrive but my conscience is clear.

And what about the press campaign? You seemed very angry about the way certain newspapers turned against you.
The only thing I am happy about is that I'm nobody's stooge. There are so many vested interests and often if you say no to an interview, they write bad things about you in retaliation. But I'm proud that I haven't become anyone's stooge, that I continue to follow my own philosophy, my own way of being, respecting those people who respect me. I felt that [Madrid-based sports daily] *AS* orchestrated a campaign against me – everyone could see that.

Lurking in the background here is the fact that you haven't had your contract renewed. Why not?
Well, because they decided at the time that they didn't want to renew my contract. And, logically, they're not going to renew it now [it runs out in summer 2006]. That's the way football is. They renewed the contracts of those players they wanted to renew and, as for me, it looks like I'm going to see mine out.

Does that hurt?
No. I've always been conscious of the way football really is. I've seen lots of team-mates suffer and I knew it would happen to me one day. The way it happened disappoints me, though, because I have always, always given my all, but I was forewarned by the examples of colleagues of mine.

Do you mean people like Fernando Hierro and Vicente Del Bosque? Both were shipped out of Madrid having expected, and deserved, far better treatment.
Oh, not just here, people at Barcelona and other clubs. I know people who have been at a club all their lives and then been booted up the backside.

What would have been the ideal for you? Stay at Madrid for the rest of your career? Have a couple more seasons? Or do something else?
I don't like making long-term plans because in football you make a plan and – bam! – it's ruined. What I would have liked is for them to have treated me in a sincere, straightforward way, for them to have told me honestly what they expected of me, what they wanted from me, because I always gave everything.

So, what now? Do you fulfil your contract or move on?
I'm waiting for them to say something to me, because no one has said anything at all yet. I've got a year left and unless someone speaks to me, I'm going to have to see out my contract.

It would be hard to face another year here like the last couple of months of this season.
Yes, especially for someone who's used to playing all the time. But there's a lot in play here, many factors. We need to sort all of that out first and then decide what to do. I think I have two years left at a good level.

Have you had other offers?
Lots of people have rung me over the last couple of months but, quite honestly, I haven't wanted to do anything or draw things out because I belong to Madrid still and I have to wait. Until they say something to me, there's no point talking to anyone else.

You've said lots of times that you would like to play in England.
I said that it was a dream to play in England and the football there attracts me but my words have been exaggerated. I said that – but only if I had to move on.

Now you might have to. And you speak perfect English.
Well, I get by...

Have you spoken to the Spaniards currently playing in England?
Not about football, no. We haven't really crossed paths.

If you do leave, how will you look back on your career here?
Madrid have given me a lot. I would never confuse the club with some of the people at the club. People come and go, but the club will always be there. This club has given me a lot – memories, trophies – and I think I've given the club a lot back.

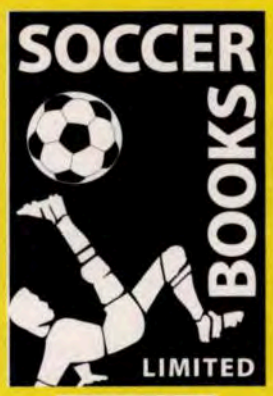
You say you've got two years left at the top; then what? Do you fancy being a coach?
No, no way. I definitely won't be a coach. Maybe a businessman, ha, ha, ha!

Done deals

Transfers that are signed and sealed

Off to Camp Nou...Van Bommel

Yakubu AIYEGBENI: Portsmouth to Middlesbrough
Zlatan BAJRAMOVIC: Freiburg to Schalke
Daniel BIEROFKA: Leverkusen to Stuttgart
Delron BUCKLEY: Bielefeld to Dortmund
Simon DAVIES: Tottenham to Everton
Philipp DEGEN: Basle to Dortmund
Asier DEL HORNO: Athletic Bilbao to Chelsea
EDU: Arsenal to Valencia
Fabian ERNST: Bremen to Schalke
GERARD Lopez: Barcelona to Monaco
Vahid HASHEMIAN: Bayern to Hannover
Thomas HITZLSPERGER: Villa to Stuttgart
Marek JANKULOVSKI: Udinese to Milan
Ali KARIMI: Al Ahli (UAE) to Bayern Munich
Philipp LAHM: Stuttgart to Bayern (return loan)
Ludovic MAGNIN: Bremen to Stuttgart
Edgar MANUCHARYAN: Pyunik Yerevan to Ajax
Patrick OWOMOYELA: Bielefeld to Bremen
Jose REINA: Villarreal to Liverpool
Mark VAN BOMMEL: PSV to Barcelona
Rafael VAN DER VAART: Ajax to Hamburg
Johann VOGEL: PSV to Milan
Tim WIESE: Kaiserslautern to Bremen



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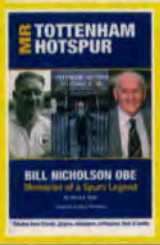

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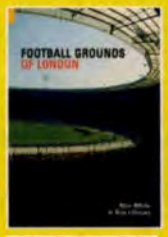

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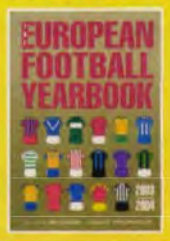

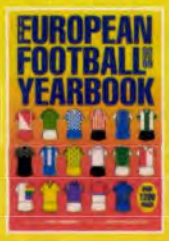

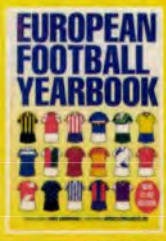

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Trap heading home in

The veteran coach hankers for Italy again after taking Benfica to the Portuguese title. Keir Radnedge reports

GIOVANNI TRAPATTONI IS following the old adage to "quit while you're ahead" after leading Benfica to their first Portuguese League title in 11 years.

The Eagles of Lisbon ended term three points ahead of FC Porto after drawing 1-1 at Boavista in their last game of the season. The club's record 31st League title prompted delirious celebrations in the capital and an informal fans' vote of confidence in the 66-year-old Italian coach who had been hardly to their liking earlier in the season.

Trapattoni's popularity remained unaffected by events a week later when Benfica, despite taking the lead through an early Simao penalty, lost 2-1 to Vitoria Setubal in the Cup Final. They thus missed out on what would have been their first Double since 1987.

Already, however, it was common knowledge that the homesickness which twice got the better of Trapattoni at Bayern Munich was about to take him home to Serie A.

He can now return with the satisfaction of having earned a place among the coaching elite – Bela Guttmann, Lajos Czeizler, Max Merkel, Sven Goran Eriksson, Christoph Daum and Vujadin Boskov – to have won League titles in three European countries.

A queue of interested Italian clubs had already begun to form outside the front door of the man who has used successful exile to re-establish his reputation back home after the depressing conclusion, at Euro 2004, to his four-year reign as Italy's national coach.

Benfica president Jorge Filipe Vieira and general manager Jose Veiga did their best to try to persuade Trapattoni to stay on for the Champions League adventure. However the desire to return to Italy was, for Trapattoni, enhanced by the knowledge that Benfica fans have little patience with coaches who cannot lead them back to the European Cup-winning heights of the early 1960s. The prospects of the Eagles springing a Porto or Liverpool-style surprise next season are remote, to say the least.

"It's been a wonderful adventure here," said Trapattoni. "This is a fantastic country, it's great to be so close to the sea and the weather is excellent. But I miss home and my family a great deal. Paola, my wife, is tired of being a football widow. I have another year on my contract but I am ready to leave now.

"I must say that the football here is different – more than I expected – but I think I can take away the satisfaction of having done a good job. I've won a lot of titles in my career but I can honestly say this was one of the most difficult in any of the three countries in which I've been.

"Of course, in these circumstances it's always right and proper to thank the people I worked with – from the president down – but I also owe a special word for the fitness coach Rodolfo Moura, who did a great job in the first five months of the season getting [striker] Pedro Mantorras fit both mentally and physically."

'It's been a wonderful adventure but I miss my family...I'm ready to go'

Trapattoni denied that increasing speculation over his departure was a contributory factor to the Cup Final defeat. He said: "We made an ideal start with an early goal but we weren't fresh enough, we didn't have the batteries properly charged as in our previous important matches in the League campaign. It wasn't the same Benfica.

"Maybe the boys' concentration had wandered a bit after winning the League. Still, congratulations to Setubal and Jose Rachao, whom I like very much as a coach. On the day they were the better team."

So now where? Lazio president Claudio Lotito,

TEAM OF THE SEASON

* The team is based on the number of times each player was voted into the ESM XI of the Month (figure in brackets). The maximum number was nine.

PETR CECH (CHELSEA)
Beat off competition from Casillas, Dida and Buffon to be hailed as Europe's top keeper. Proved to be an inspired signing from Rennes last summer as he kept 25 clean sheets in the Premier League.

CARLES PUYOL (BARCELONA)
Captain and Catalan hero for the fans of the new Spanish champions – and an outstanding defender to boot. At the heart of what proved to be La Liga's meanest defence.

JOHN TERRY (CHELSEA)
Some outstanding performances in the Premier League and Champions League. Showed guts and technique in equal measure and scored some crucial goals at home and in Europe. Grew in stature as the season progressed.

FABIO CANNAVARO (JUVENTUS)
Reunited with former Parma team-mate Lilian Thuram in Turin and provided the backbone for Juve's Italian League triumph.

RONALDINHO (BARCELONA)
In sparkling form once again, though maybe not hitting the heights of the first half of 2004. Scored the goal of the season, against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge, and continued to delight with his unpredictable genius.

DECO (BARCELONA)
The unsung hero at Camp Nou who confounded the critics by proving that his 2003-04 campaign at Porto was no fluke. The complete midfield all-rounder. *See profile, page 32.*

MARK VAN BOMMEL (PSV)
Signed off from PSV in style, bringing inspiration and dynamism to the midfield – with fantastic results.

FRANK LAMPARD (CHELSEA)
Just seems to get better every season. A first League championship medal came along with some wonderful goals and some brilliant performances in Europe.

ARJEN ROBBEN (CHELSEA)
A brilliant debut season in England, despite being hampered by injuries for much of the second half of the

triumph

having won his battles with the legal and tax authorities in Italy over repayment of the club's debts, is a Trapattoni fan – but not the only one.

As for Benfica, initial favourites for the job included Paul Le Guen, who surprisingly quit French champions Lyon at the end of the season, Ronald Koeman, who stepped out of the Ajax hot seat mid-season, and Jose Antonio Camacho, whose departure from Benfica last summer for what proved a brief spell at Real Madrid opened up the vacancy for Trapattoni.

TRAPATTONI'S TROPHIES

World Club Cup (1):	1985 (Juventus)
European Supercup (1):	1984 (Juventus)
European Cup (1):	1985 (Juventus)
Cup-winners Cup (1):	1984 (Juventus)
UEFA Cup (3):	1977, 1993 (Juventus), 1991 (Inter)
Italian League (7):	1977, 1978, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1986 (Juventus), 1989 (Inter)
German League (1):	1997 (Bayern)
Portuguese League (1):	2005 (Benfica)
Italian Cup (2):	1979, 1983 (Juventus)
German Cup (1):	1998 (Bayern)
Italian Supercup (2):	1979, 1983 (Juventus)
German Supercup (1):	1997 (Bayern)

Rare feat...Trapattoni has now won League titles in three European countries

2004-05

campaign. Chelsea came alive when Robben was on top of his game.

SAMUEL ETO'O (BARCELONA)
Proved he had the big-match temperament to match his fantastic technique with some breathtaking performances. Missed out on the ESM Golden Shoe and Spanish top scorer awards by one (disputed) goal.

ANDRII SHEVCHENKO (MILAN)
Another outstanding campaign for Milan and Ukraine, marred only by his butt on Inter's Materazzi in the Champions League quarter-finals and his missed penalty in the Final shoot-out. If Liverpool keeper Dudek had not pulled off one of the greatest double saves seen in a Final, Sheva would have been a hero and his place in history assured.

COACHES OF THE SEASON

DAVID MOYES
EVERTON
Steering moderately-resourced Everton into the Champions League was arguably a greater achievement than that of his rival across Stanley Park, Rafa Benitez, in winning the competition. It was all the more impressive given that key players Wayne Rooney and Thomas Gravesen had been sold on.

GUUS HIDDINK
PSV EINDHOVEN
Few people gave Hiddink much hope when he returned to PSV last summer after the sales of Arjen Robben, Mateja Kezman and Dennis Rommedahl. But PSV won the Dutch League, and made the Champions League knockout stages for the first time in eight attempts, reaching the semi-finals, where they were so unlucky to lose to Milan.

PAUL LE GUEN
LYON
Quit after steering Lyon to a fourth successive French League title (the third under his aegis). Le Guen believed he had taken the club as far as he could. His successor, Gerard Houllier, faces an uphill struggle to emulate the feats of Le Guen, who has not received the recognition he deserves.

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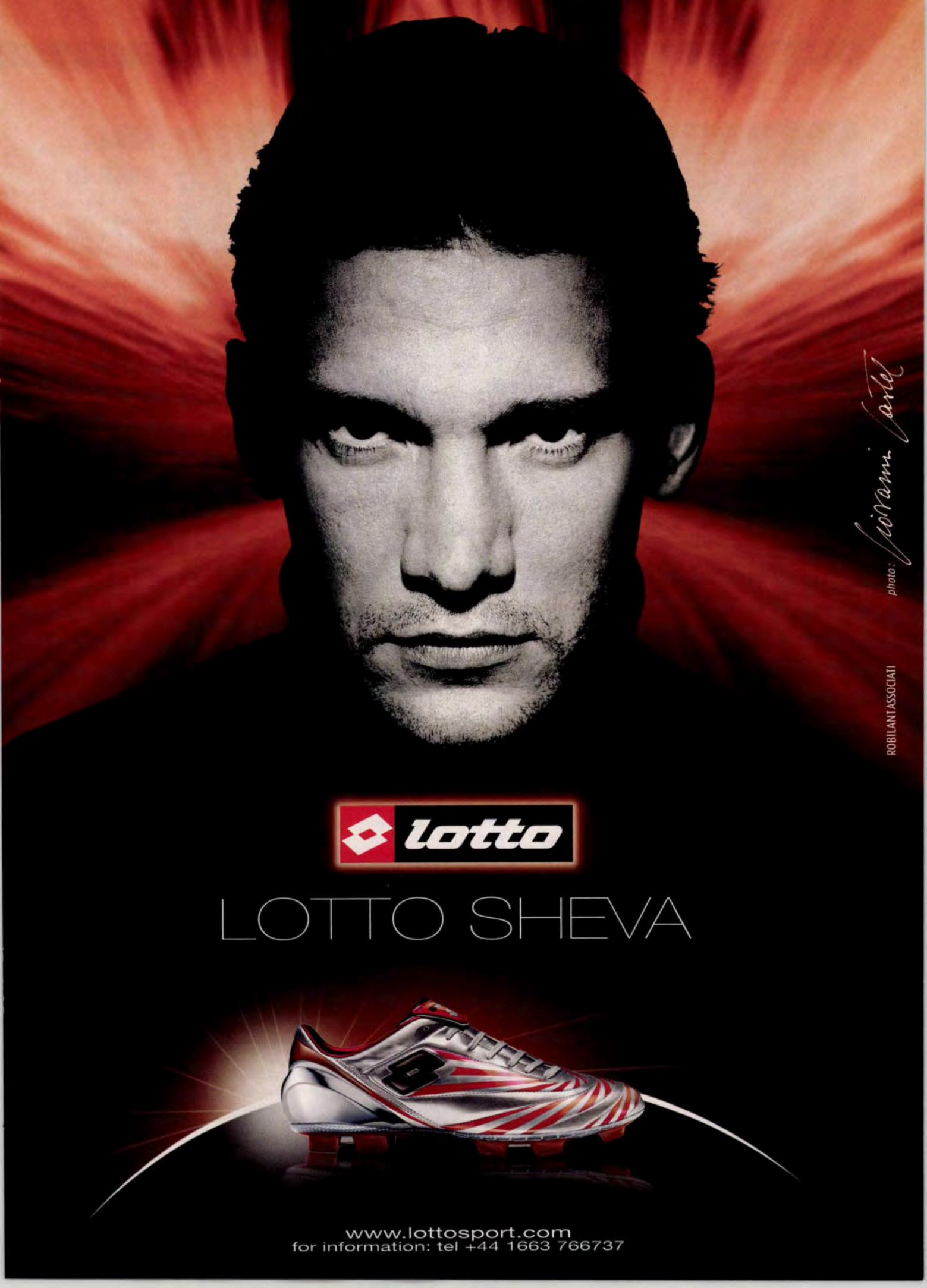
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Tragic end...Foe collapses during Cameroon's semi-final against Colombia at the 2003 Confederations Cup

Waste of space

There should be no place for the Confederations Cup in an already crowded calendar

IT'S THAT TIME again when centre-stage must be taken by that fatal, intrusive, unnecessary, irrelevant piece of footballing nonsense known as the Confederations Cup.

Germany hosts what is supposed to be a 'dummy run' for next year's World Cup finals. Except that Germany does not need the practice and, in any case, the Confederations Cup bears as much resemblance to a World Cup as the Eton Wall Game does to the European Cup Final.

Remember the Confederations Cup? That's it, the tournament in which poor, overloaded Marc-Vivien Foe died on the pitch in France two years ago. So, he had a congenital heart defect that might have killed him during any match? Maybe. But to be sacrificed at the Confederations Cup, of all events, was shameful.

The tournament is contested by the six regional champions plus the hosts and the world champions. This time that means Argentina (as Copa America runners-up to Brazil), Australia, Germany and Tunisia in Group A, with Brazil (world champions), Greece, Japan and Mexico in Group B. Then come two semi-finals followed by a Final. Five of next year's World Cup stadia will be used – Frankfurt, Hanover, Cologne, Leipzig and Nurnberg – but not the high-profile Olympic stadium in Berlin and the new Allianz Arena in Munich.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter – the man who thinks European leagues should, ideally, be cut to 16 clubs apiece for the sake of the international calendar – will preside over an event featuring 16 games in 15 days. The maximum gap between group matches is three days for each nation.

So we will have as many substitutes as possible and wholesale changes from one match to another. And Blatter will no doubt, at his concluding press conference, wring his hands at the terrible strain being placed on today's top players by all these disgracefully overcrowded domestic competitions and by those rapaciously greedy international club events that are so popular with the poor misguided fans.

The players have mixed views. Germany's stars are in favour; not surprising, since they have been warned to be on their best behaviour (no sponsor conflicts) if they want to be on board next year. But Harry Kewell will not be there for Australia, proving he really was injured during the Champions League Final (just in case anyone believed those nasty rumours). Ronaldo will not be there either – despite being warned that Brazil might overlook him for the rest of their World Cup campaign. He has called the bluff of national coach Carlos Alberto Parreira, and we all know which of the two individuals is more important to the Brazilian federation and its sponsors.

Bayern Munich chief executive Karl-Heinz Rummenigge is an opponent of the entire circus. He comes at the issue from a variety of apparently contrasting standpoints – as a German, as a club executive and as a former high-class footballer. He says: "Players have too little holiday to recharge the batteries as it is. The wheel is spinning out of control." Of course, Rummenigge does have a vested interest. With five players likely to be in the Germany squad, Bayern are the most involved German club.

At the 2002 World Cup I asked Blatter about the contradiction of the Confederations Cup. He acknowledged the problems but averred that FIFA was contracted to the next two – 2003 and 2005 – because of commercial contracts. So this could be the last edition? Don't bet on it.

Milan cash in

LIVERPOOL may have won the Champions League Final out on the pitch, but Milan won the financial duel. The Italian club collected some £8.2million from UEFA's commercial and TV pot in appearance and points money. Liverpool were next highest earners, with £7.9m.

It's interesting that prize money has eased back since the second group stage was scrapped. But do not expect UEFA to plead poverty.

A FOOTBALLER'S LIFE is not all showbiz parties with the occasional match thrown in. Gary Neville (above) and Rio Ferdinand found a very different world the day after Manchester United's Cup Final defeat by Arsenal.

Along with Manchester City goalkeeper David James, they visited Malawi to encourage the fight against HIV/Aids. The trip was arranged by the FA and the Department for International Development. Sorry if that spoils the agenda for the anti-football whingers.

Ref comes clean on Heysel penalty

CONTROVERSY OVER the Heysel disaster 20 years ago overshadowed the end of the Belgian season.

Old wounds about the disaster were reopened the day after Germinal Beerschot's surprise Cup Final defeat of champions Club Brugge. This happened to be the exact anniversary and was marked by the unveiling of a memorial sculpture at what is now the Roi Baudouin stadium.

Most intriguing, however, was an admission from Andre Daina, the Swiss referee from 20 years back, that he had been wrong to award Juventus the penalty from which Michel Platini scored the game's only goal.

"I think I was the victim of the fair play of the English players," said Daina. "One of them committed a foul at the other end and handed the ball to an Italian. I was about 70 metres from the Liverpool goal at the time.

"One of the Juve players sent [Zbigniew] Boniek away and he was probably the quickest player on the pitch. It all happened so fast there was no way I could have got near the action. From where I was it looked like a clear penalty. I was sure of it, badly positioned as I was. At the end of the match my linesman even said to me that the foul had been inside the penalty-box and he had been afraid I would give a free-kick on the edge.

"Of course, now I know that the foul was committed outside the penalty-box. Television proves it."

Another fascinating detail from that night was that Daina changed back out of his kit and into his suit and tie before the game as the increasingly grim news was relayed to him. He put on his kit again, of course, after it was decided to play the Final. This was, for him, "the least bad option", though he was aware by then that "around 41 or 42 people" had died.

And what about stadium safety, has Belgium learned its lesson? Not according to former federation secretary Alain Courtois. The former joint chief executive of Euro 2000, now an MP, says: "Our stadia are not up to standard. The Baudouin stadium was rebuilt but, by modern standards, it's not good enough for big matches and the rest of our stadia are in an even worse state. Belgian stadia are bottom of the class in Europe. If nothing is done we risk further catastrophes."

Decisive moment...Liverpool keeper Bruce Grobbelaar dives the wrong way as Platini's penalty heads for goal

Pluskal deserves to be remembered

FRANZ BECKENBAUER needed his Schwarzenbeck; Steven Gerrard needs his Hamann; Frank Lampard needs his Makelele.

Defenders or midfielders with an eye for the attacking chance cannot be in two places at once. They depend on team-mates happy to stay out of the limelight and cover whatever gaps their colleague may leave behind. Such a self-sacrificial player was Svatopluk Pluskal, who has died aged 74.

As Czechoslovakia reached the 1962 World Cup Final, Pluskal excited none of the praise heaped upon wing-half Jozef Masopust. Yet, without Pluskal to protect centre-back Jan Popluhar, Masopust would not have been free to roam at will. That applied as much for club, Dukla Prague, as for country. The balance remained as intuitive as ever for the World/Europe XIs the pair appeared in together – in the English FA centenary match in 1963 and in Stanley Matthews' farewell in 1965.

"The other side of my personality on the pitch," was how Masopust remembered his old team-mate.

Committed to the cause...Pluskal acrobatically gets to the ball ahead of Spain's Luisito Suarez

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WS WORLD SOCCER GLOBAL VIEW Paul Gardner

Bring down curtain on penalty jig

A shoot-out was a farcical way to end the most important game of the season

WHEN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE was performing in his own plays some 400 years ago, they used to finish off the evening with a jig. The cast would perform a lively dance on stage, there might even be some bawdy lyrics to liven things up, and everyone went home in a good mood.

Now that seems ridiculous to us. How could you end the sombre *Hamlet* – in which virtually the entire cast ends up severely dead – by performing a lighthearted dance? Absurd. We don't mock our great dramas like that any more, no sir, not us.

But we do. At least football does. I'm thinking of the Champions League Final, a wonderfully dramatic event full of genuine emotional ups and downs, two hours of enthralling struggle and strife, with a lot of good football…and then it gets turned into a farcical jig, a stupid, brainless little dance to close the event.

In football, we call this jig the penalty shoot-out. Although – just like its Elizabethan predecessor – it features the same cast, it has nothing at all to do with what we've just been watching.

I'm talking in particular about the ludicrous procedure that allowed Liverpool to go home from Istanbul with the trophy. No, I am not saying they did not deserve to win. My criticism is entirely directed at the fatuous shoot-out fiasco that was used as a means of deciding the most important game of the year.

'Either referees don't know the shoot-out rules or they refuse to apply them...or they're blind'

The whole rigmarole is farcical enough anyway without the extra little bits of undignified inanity that Jerzy Dudek added to it. This was the same Dudek who had, only minutes before, made a remarkable double save to keep Liverpool alive. Now, suddenly, we got Dudek the clown giving us his uproarious spaghetti legs routine.

Controversial save…Dudek is way off his line as he blocks Pirlo's spot-kick in the Champions League Final

There was even more hilarity to come. Evidently not wanting to be left out of the fun, the referee and his assistants now joined in with the final masterstroke that swept the evening's spectacle into the theatre of the absurd.

What on earth were you doing, Manuel Enrique Mejuto Gonzalez and your various assistants, when Andrea Pirlo ran up to take his spot-kick? Were you so mesmerised by Dudek's antics that you failed to notice that he had advanced a good two yards from his line before Pirlo struck the ball?

The officials made a huge error, but Sepp Blatter will say it's OK, as we have to accept their mistakes. So one of the sport's great occasions gets reduced to a silly jig, then further diminished, by referee incompetence, to total farce. Dudek passes quickly from game hero to circus clown to cheat, and the whole procedure gets official approval.

We saw exactly this two years ago when Dida was allowed to get away with obvious cheating and win the whole shebang for Milan.

If the officials, with nothing else to do other than apply the straightforward shoot-out rules, cannot spot illegal goalkeeper movement, then we can pretty soon find something that can.

A perfectly ordinary TV replay will do the job perfectly. And before the Blatterites start jumping up and down and yelling "No replays!", let me point out that we are not dealing here with the game of football. We're talking about a totally artificial situation tacked on at the end of a drawn game.

There is no play to be interrupted, there will be no delays involved while the replay is quickly looked at and the message of OK or Retake is flashed down to the optically-challenged officials on the field.

Twice in three years, Europe's top referees have shown that either they don't know the shoot-out rules or they refuse to apply them…or they are just plain blind.

But there's a better way of deciding games. Counting corner-kicks remains the one tie-breaker that is related to what actually happens during the regular game. My unofficial count for the Champions League Final, after extra-time, was Milan 10 Liverpool 5. So Milan win? Not necessarily, that's not the way it works.

In that game, Liverpool would have gone into extra-time 'losing' 6-2 on corners (obviously this count would be up on the scoreboard). Meaning that Liverpool would have to attack, to up their corner-kick score, or get the deciding goal. No caution would have been possible – and obviously no 'playing for penalties' – and a much livelier extra-time would be the result.

Surely a verdict based on 120 minutes of play is to be preferred to a post-game Shakespearean jig?

Money worries

Simon Banks doubts if Malcolm Glazer can make enough cash from Manchester United to repay his debts

MALCOLM GLAZER HAS finally bought Manchester United after acquiring the necessary 75 per cent of the club's shares required to take it off the stock exchange. The US tycoon is now mopping up the remaining shares and the club will probably delist at the end of June, 14 years after it made its stock exchange debut.

The news has been angrily received by Manchester United fans, who have dusted off the 'Not For Sale' banners they have kept in storage since seeing off Rupert Murdoch's bid for the club in 1999. On that occasion the Monopolies and Mergers Commission blocked the deal because of concerns over its effect on the UK television market. This time around there is unlikely to be any regulatory intervention. Indeed, the only regulatory body to express concern over the deal has been America's National Football League, which is seeking assurances that Glazer's purchase will not affect the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, which he also owns.

Supporters are worried that the financing of the deal saddles United with massive debts, and their concerns would appear to be entirely justified. Glazer has had to borrow at least £540million to be able to make shareholders the £3 per share offer they couldn't refuse, and he is intending to repay the debt out of the club's earnings. Over the past five years it has averaged pre-tax profits and dividends of around £35m a year, impressive enough in terms of the generally unprofitable football sector, but not sufficient to pay interest on the debt, which could easily amount to £50m a year.

That is why the United board felt unable to recommend the deal to shareholders. As chief executive David Gill commented in April this year: "Where are the margins [needed to service the debt]? They don't exist."

Some commentators have speculated that Glazer has a plan to radically increase United's revenues, but most of these are secured and fixed for a considerable time. The deal with Nike as kit sponsor and merchandising partner, for example, is worth around £20m a year and runs for 13 years. Similarly, the sponsorship deal with Vodafone, which nets the club £9m a year, has recently been extended to run for another four years. Even if more lucrative deals were available, which seems doubtful, United would have to pay massive penalties to Nike and Vodafone before it could take advantage of them.

United brings in around a third of its income from television, and there has been speculation that it is this area Glazer will target to increase revenues. It has been pointed out that the club only earns £2.7m a year from the sale of its overseas TV rights through the Premier League and it could probably make a lot more if it were to sell the rights itself.

However, in order to do so it would require the agreement of at least 14 other Premier League clubs, and they would be unlikely to give up their share in order to help Glazer meet his commitments.

That some of the finance for Glazer's deal has been provided by merchant bank J P Morgan, who planned to finance the Media Partners breakaway European superleague in 1999, has raised the prospect of that ill-fated project being resurrected. That also looks highly improbable, as the UEFA Champions League has been so successful in delivering revenue to Europe's biggest clubs that the incentive for them to go it alone has been removed, especially against the background of falling TV rights values.

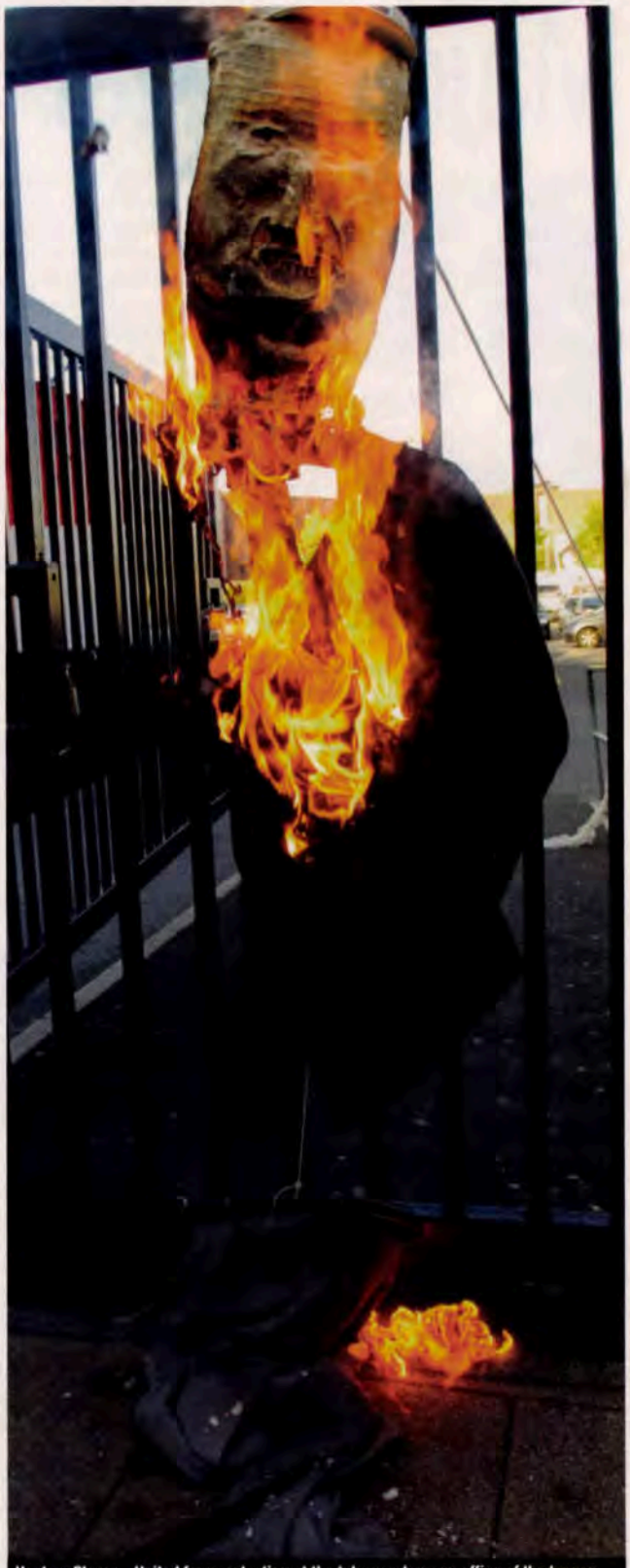
Ticket price hike?

If Glazer cannot raise sponsorship or media income there's only one revenue stream left – match tickets. Last year the club earned £60m from ticket sales and corporate hospitality, so a 50 per cent increase in proceeds would go some way towards paying off the debts. Expenditure could be cut, too, by reducing the wage bill and halting spending on new players.

No wonder United fans are worried, as hiking ticket prices to watch a cut-price side hardly seems a recipe for success.

The previous board spent £150m on players in the past five years and have just endured another trophyless season. With Chelsea able to rely on Roman Abramovich's millions and Arsenal soon to reap the benefits of its new Emirates stadium, Manchester United needs to invest heavily in players to rise to the top of English football and remain a force in the European game.

Glazer's deal makes that unlikely to happen.



Heat on Glazer...United fans protesting at the takeover burn an effigy of the tycoon

Brian Glanville on Ferenc Puskas

Major player

At the gallop...Puskas in his Madrid glory days

FERENC PUSKAS – so many images emerge, but my favourite is only marginally to do with football. The scene: a street in Santiago, towards the climax of the 1962 World Cup. The Chileans, their team having just taken third place, throng the streets in clamorous celebration. There, in a shop doorway, I spot Puskas, the eternal Budapest urchin, grinning hugely and munching monkey nuts.

He had played in the tournament, but not for Hungary, whom he had captained in the 1954 World Cup Final, but for Spain. He had stayed out of Hungary following the revolution of 1956, together with such other famed stars as Sandor Kocsis and Zoltan Czibor. Thence, in due course, to Real Madrid and his celebrated partnership with Alfredo Di Stefano, which reached its apogee at Hampden Park in 1960 when they scored seven goals between them against hapless Eintracht Frankfurt in the European Cup Final.

'Despite an expanding stomach he hit a hat-trick in the European Cup Final'

Another vivid image comes from Hungary's 6-3 demolition of England at Wembley in November 1953. When the ball reached Puskas at England's right-hand post, he neatly dragged it back with the sole of his formidable left foot, and, in the jewelled words of *The Times*' football correspondent, Geoffrey Green, "[Billy] Wright went past him like a fire engine going to the wrong fire."

Nicknamed "The Galloping Major", a reference to his somewhat functionless rank in the Hungarian army, Puskas was born in Budapest in 1927 in the suburb of Kispest, and joined the local club of the same name. At 18 he scored on his debut for Hungary, against Austria, and ended his international career in 1956 with the amazing tally of 85 goals in 84 games.

When the communist regime formed Honved, the army club, he and most of the bright Hungarian stars of that era were inducted, with the salient exception of deep-lying centre-forward Nandor Hidegkuti, who played for Voros Logobo, now MTK.

Puskas was a major force in Hungary's triumph in the 1952 Olympic tournament in Helsinki, when the team were at last allowed to emerge from behind the Iron Curtain.

The Hungarians were firm favourites to win the World Cup in Switzerland two years later, and probably would have done so had Puskas not been kicked by German centre-half Werner Liebrich in a farce of an opening game. Hungary won it 8-3 but the perverse pattern of the tournament decreed the sides would meet again in Berne in the Final.

Puskas, the skipper, was sidelined by his injury until then and the team were doing perfectly well without him, but he insisted he should play. Alas, he looked well below form and, in addition, forced other changes on the team that worked against them.

For all that, Puskas scored a very late equaliser which was wrongly ruled out. He beat the German offside trap, raced on and shot past the keeper, Toni Turek. That would have made it 3-3, but Bill Ling, the English referee, alerted by the flagging of his Welsh linesman, Mervyn Griffiths, gave offside, and Hungary were beaten.

In May 1962, despite an ever-expanding stomach, he scored a first-half hat-trick for Real Madrid against Benfica in the European Cup Final. But the Portuguese hit back from their 3-2 half-time deficit to win 5-3.

After the 1956 revolution, when Honved providentially found themselves on tour abroad, Puskas lived for a while in Milan, before going to Madrid, where he discreetly adapted to Di Stefano's noted autocracy. It was said that at the end of a season in which he and Di Stefano were neck and neck for the League top scorer award, he tactfully passed to his team-mate when he could easily have scored himself, so the Argentinian could overtake him.

After hanging up his boots, Puskas coached for a time in Toronto. Later, he took Panathinaikos to the 1971 European Cup Final at Wembley, where they lost to Ajax. He has spent his latter years in retirement in Budapest.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

JULY 1985

"ONE of the most depressing features of the aftermath of the Heysel stadium horror has been the way in which the English League clubs have tried to deny and evade their responsibilities [wrote Keir Radnedge].

"Not to put too fine a point on it, they have totally misread the mood of the nation.

"The British public – those who couldn't care a fig for football as well as the fans – were not particularly surprised and not particularly aggrieved at the suspensions inflicted so quickly by UEFA and FIFA.

"Most people felt that such shock treatment was long overdue and looked to the League clubs to – belatedly – respond with positive action against hooliganism.

"Like the ostrich, English football administration has buried its head in the sand and waited for reality to go away. On the occasions when it has dared look out, it has been merely a grab at a slice of the financial action from the latest short-term innovation – be it perimeter advertising, shirt sponsorship or television.

"The clubs have, by their own inaction, allowed themselves to become hostages to mayhem. Perhaps it is not, therefore, so surprising some of the statements from their leaders have been so wide of the mark.

"Football League president Jack Dunnett said, on learning of the blanket FIFA ban on English clubs: 'Why should all the other clubs be penalised because 150 hooligans went mad in Brussels?'

"His comment was typical of those of many club chairmen, who should understand that English football has been punished not because 150 hooligans went mad, but because 39 people died."

Bayern at the Double

GERMANY

Bravo Bayern...skipper Oliver Kahn and his team-mates celebrate Cup Final victory over Schalke

IT WAS AS predictable as local sausages smeared with mustard or the *Fohn,* the warm, dry winds that regularly whip across Munich from the Alps. Bayern Munich, Germany's most successful club, were always likely to reassert their domestic dominance in 2004-05 having won only the League Cup last season. So it transpired. The Bavarians finished the League campaign 14 points ahead of nearest challengers Schalke, and also beat the runners-up 2-1 in a frenetic, foul-littered Cup Final in Berlin.

Schalke had good reason to complain that Bayern's Hasan Salihamidzic – who had come on as a substitute seconds earlier – was offside when scoring the Final winner 15 minutes from time. Yet as national team boss Jurgen Klinsmann pointed out, Bayern's victory was "poetic justice".

The Bavarians, for whom Roy Makaay opened the scoring after 42 minutes following a sequence of pinball around the Schalke goal, were superior for most of the game, and the margin of victory would have been considerably wider without a number of first-half aberrations from referee Florian Meyer and his assistants.

No wonder Bayern president Karl-Heinz Rummenigge was seething at the break – "We feel we've been discriminated against" – having seen Schalke draw level after being awarded a dubious penalty on the stroke of half-time. Ever-impressive midfielder Lincoln converted the spot-kick, given after Ailton fell under an innocuous challenge from Willy Sagnol. Earlier, Schalke midfielder Sven Vermant had somehow got away with handling Michael Ballack's shot in the box, and a Claudio Pizarro goal for Bayern was wrongly ruled out for offside.

Ultimately, though, the Cup was shipped to the most deserving home. It might have been a different story if the Schalke who had twice beaten Bayern in the League had turned up in Berlin. But that was probably asking too much. The *Gelsenkirchener* lost five of their last nine League games and had clearly not recovered after losing their head-to-head Bundesliga battle with Bayern.

As for victorious coach Felix Magath, this was the moment he had been waiting for all his coaching career. Once pigeon-holed as a 'fireman', someone to be called in by clubs fighting for survival, he has proved at Stuttgart and in his first season at Bayern that he can do just as well in the upper echelons.

"Four years ago when I left Eintracht Frankfurt I was tired of trying to save clubs with poor results and no money," said Magath. "Now it's a completely different situation at Bayern. This is the first time I've been in charge of a team with a real chance of winning competitions. This Double is, I hope, just the beginning. I'd like to do as well as my predecessor, Ottmar Hitzfeld, and win the Champions League."

Champions League race

With the title race and the identity of the relegated threesome (Freiburg, Hansa Rostock and Bochum) long since settled, the interest on the final weekend of the season was generated by a four-team battle for the last two Champions League tickets.

Schalke eventually got the other automatic group spot after holding on to second place thanks to a 3-2 win at Freiburg. Hertha's goalless draw with Hannover and Stuttgart's 3-1 home loss to Bayern opened the door for Werder Bremen, 2-1 winners at Kaiserslautern, to take third place and enter the Champions League qualifiers.

Werder were fortunate to salvage something. Beaten by all the Bundesliga big guns in the second half of the season, thumped 10-2 on aggregate in the Champions League by Lyon and with French playmaker Johan Micoud often failing to spark, they were a shadow of last season's emphatic title winners. But at least they stuck together.

Nurnberg's Slovak midfielder Marek Mintal carried off the League top scorer prize, finishing with 24 goals, despite a late surge from Bayern's Makaay. The Dutchman scored 10 times in the last five games but fell two short of Mintal's tally.

Koln, relegated last season, won the Second Division at a canter and will be joined in the top flight by MSV Duisburg and Eintracht Frankfurt.

Nick Bidwell

Eagles soar again

PORTUGAL

BENFICA ENDED THEIR longest title drought – 11 years – when a 1-1 draw away to Boavista on the final day secured them the championship. The Eagles as good as clinched it the week before when beating title challengers Sporting 1-0 at home in the Lisbon derby. Luisao scored the goal with seven minutes to go to put Benfica three points clear of their rivals and FC Porto. The title win extended Benfica's record haul to 31.

However, Giovanni Trapattoni's men missed out on the Double, when losing 2-1 to Vitoria Setubal in the Cup Final.

While millions of Benfica supporters celebrated their team's title triumph, deposed champions Porto, who pipped Sporting for second place, were already plotting their revenge. Out went Jose Couceiro, the club's third coach of a troubled season, and in came Co Adriaanse, who worked wonders at AZ Alkmaar by taking them to third in the Dutch League and the UEFA Cup semi-finals.

Porto also shipped out Maniche, Costinha and Giorgios Seitaridis to Dinamo Moscow for a combined fee of £13.7million as a step towards reshaping their team ahead of next season.

Sporting may not revolutionise their squad, but they badly need to recuperate after a disastrous conclusion to their season. They lost their last three games – the derby against Benfica, the UEFA Cup Final (3-1 to CSKA Moscow) and their final League match (4-2 at home to lowly Nacional) – amid internal bickering. The end-of-season training sessions were marked by in-fighting and quarrelling, with Brazilian defender Anderson Polga claiming he would never play for coach Jose Peseiro again.

The title run-in overshadowed Luis Figo's announcement that he was available for international duty, having 'retired' after Euro 2004. He was picked immediately for Portugal's World Cup qualifiers against joint group leaders Slovakia and Estonia. Figo, holder of a record 110 caps, will surely help settle a team looking out of sorts in recent matches.

Pedro Pinto

Closing in...Benfica's Luisao (far right) sets off to celebrate his crucial winner against Sporting, whose players vainly protest about its validity

SWITZERLAND

Basle hold on after Thun turn off

Basle clinched their 11th League title with three games to spare after Thun's challenge finally faded. While Basle were beating St Gallen 3-1 at home, Thun could only draw 1-1 at home to Young Boys, leaving the championship outcome beyond doubt.

At one stage during the run-in, Thun were six points behind Basle, the defending champions, with two games in hand, but the challengers showed wildly inconsistent form, thrashing Schaffhausen 4-0 and Zurich 5-1 but also losing 5-2 at home to Grasshopper and then 4-1 away to Basle themselves.

It is Basle's third championship in four seasons, but it was a far from easy campaign. Coach Christian Gross berated his squad about a perceived lack of motivation on several occasions and had another rant when, having secured the title, his charges lost 4-1 away to Grasshopper. "We need new blood if we are to make any impact in the Champions League," said Gross. "Several players could move on."

A definite departee is international defender Marco Zwyssig, who is retiring.

Zurich beat second-tier Lucerne 3-1 to lift the Cup for the seventh time, thanks to goals from Marc Schneider, Alhassane Keita and Mihai Tararache.

Ivar von Rulach

Gullit makes another early exit

All over...Gullit no longer had the board's backing

HOLLAND

FEYENOORD COACH Ruud Gullit has stepped down by mutual consent after less than a year in charge. The Rotterdam club failed to win any silverware this season and finished only fourth in the League. Although Gullit's side included the top two League scorers – Dirk Kuijt (29 goals) and Salomon Kalou (20) – the defence was weak, shipping 51 goals in 34 matches. Moreover, a number of Gullit's signings failed to live up to expectations.

The day after the last game he asked chairman Jorien Van den Herik if there were transfer funds available. Not only was he told there was no budget, but also that the board no longer had faith in him.

Gullit, who joined last July in a two-year deal, has now had four coaching appointments but has yet to see out a contract. There were also early exits at Chelsea, Newcastle and the Dutch Under-20 team.

Former PSV and Holland player Erwin Koeman is Gullit's successor, fresh from a season coaching RKC Waalwijk.

Ajax finished runners-up to PSV to win a place in the Champions League qualifiers after former pacesetters AZ hit the wall during the run-in. Coach Co Adriaanse announced in the winter he would be leaving the Alkmaar club and has now signed a two-year contract at FC Porto. He will be succeeded by former Ajax and Holland boss Louis Van Gaal.

Den Bosch were relegated, and will be replaced by Second Division champions Heracles. The Almelo club were last in the top flight in 1986.

Mark Van Bommel ended his PSV career on a high by captaining the club to the Double with a 4-0 victory over Willem II in the Cup Final. Van Bommel has signed a three-year deal with Barcelona.

Ajax's Rafael Van der Vaart has agreed personal terms with Hamburg. The 22-year-old, once linked with Real Madrid and Barcelona, has had to settle for the more modest Bundesliga side after struggling to find his form over the past year.

Feyenoord's Kalou, born in Ivory Coast, has had an application for fast-tracked Dutch citizenship status turned down and can't now get a passport before 2008. The decision is a serious blow for national coach Marco Van Basten, who had included the forward in his plans.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

AUSTRIA

Rapid relish return to the top

Rapid Wien won their first championship since 1996 in some style, putting themselves out of reach of city rivals Austria with three games still to play following a 4-1 home thrashing of bottom side Bregenz. It is Rapid's 31st League title, extending their Austrian record.

Austria Wien owner Frank Stronach took drastic action after losing out on the championship for the second year running (to Grazer AK last term), sacking coach Lars Sondergaard and sporting director Gunter Kronsteiner.

He then brought in three former star players – Toni Polster, as general manager, and Peter Stoger and Frenkie Schinkels as the new coaching team.

Sondergaard was fired despite having led Austria to the UEFA Cup quarter-finals this season, their longest run in European competition for many years. But Stronach is determined to see the club enter the Champions League.

Austria have now had 12 different head coaches since Stronach took over in 1999, and the fans are clearly tiring of his hire-and-fire style. The club's main supporter group have not attended the first halves of recent matches and unfurled 'Stronach out!' banners when they do arrive.

Harry Miltner

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Rovers docked points

Debt-ridden Shamrock Rovers also now have relegation worries after being docked eight points for submitting inaccurate accounts to the Eircom League's licensing committee. Rovers dropped to the foot of the Premier Division, three points below Finn Harps.

Rovers recently revealed debts of £1.6million and have struggled to pay players and the rent on their temporary home, Bohemians' Dalymount Park. The club's plight means they are likely to sell off their prize asset, former Northern Ireland Under-21 winger Pat McCourt, who has reportedly attracted the interest of several English clubs.

Sean Creedon

LIECHTENSTEIN

Andermatt ousted

Vaduz sacked coach Martin Andermatt less than a week after the team beat Eschen-Mauren 4-1 in the Cup Final. But three days after their triumph Vaduz lost 2-1 at home to Lucerne to slip from top spot in the Swiss Second Division for the first time in several months. This was too much for the board, who had invested heavily in new players during the January transfer window as they eyed promotion to the Swiss top flight.

The FA later confirmed Andermatt would remain in his role as national team coach until at least the end of the World Cup qualifying campaign.

Graeme Crawford

Draw so sweet for Brugge

BELGIUM

CLUB BRUGGE'S 13th League title triumph was made all the sweeter by the fact they secured it with a 2-2 draw at home to fiercest rivals and defending champions Anderlecht.

Brugge went into the penultimate round six points ahead of their opponents, meaning a point would be enough to secure the title, and they made the perfect start by taking a first-minute lead through Nastja Ceh. Hannu Tihinen equalised 10 minutes before half-time but two minutes later Ceh scored again. Although Nenad Jestrovic put the visitors level 10 minutes after the break, his side could not find the winner that would have taken the title race down to the final day.

Germinal Beerschot denied Brugge the Double by beating them 2-1 in the Cup Final. It was the first major honour for the Antwerp side.

Wing-back Peter Van der Heyden was sidelined for Brugge's last few games after injuring his right ankle in the 0-0 draw with Mons in early May. That proved to be his last game for the new champions since he has signed for Wolfsburg.

Mons were relegated along with Ostende.

Nicholas Harling

Flying the flag...title-winner Ceh

O'Neill quits after Rangers grab title

SCOTLAND

Hammer blow...Scott McDonald scores the first of his two late goals that deprived Celtic of the title

CELTIC, WHO TRAUMATICALLY lost the championship crown to Rangers in the final few minutes of the last matchday, suffered another heavy blow when manager Martin O'Neill announced he was stepping down. The former Northern Ireland international, who led Celtic to three League championships in his five-year tenure, cited personal reasons, rather than the title debacle, for his decision. O'Neill's wife, Geraldine, has been receiving treatment for cancer in recent months.

Former Scottish international and Southampton manager Gordon Strachan is the new man in charge, joining Celtic on a 12-month rolling contract – the same arrangement as his predecessor.

O'Neill's last match in charge was the Scottish Cup Final, but Celtic's 1-0 win over Dundee United was scant consolation for the loss of the League championship to the club's arch-rivals and in such agonising circumstances. Celtic, two points clear of Rangers going into the final day, had been on the verge of clinching the title as they led 1-0 at Motherwell with three minutes remaining. But then striker Scott McDonald scored twice to bring the hosts an amazing win and allow Rangers, 1-0 victors away to Hibernian, to leapfrog their rivals in the final standings.

The writing was on the wall as soon as McDonald scored his first, since a draw for Celtic would have still left them behind Rangers on goal difference.

The helicopter carrying the League trophy was swiftly diverted to Edinburgh and into the hands of Rangers skipper Barry Ferguson, whose return to Ibrox from Blackburn mid-season helped inspire Alex McLeish's team to their late-season revival.

Celtic's win over Dundee United was their third Cup Final success under O'Neill, who also led them to the 2001 League Cup and the 2003 UEFA Cup Final.

Dundee were relegated after drawing at Livingston, who have appointed former Celtic midfielder Paul Lambert as coach to replace ex-Rangers defender Richard Gough.

Alan Fairley

DENMARK

Looking up for Laudrup

Brondby coach Michael Laudrup stood on the brink of winning the domestic Double after a tumultuous few days, having suffered a nightmare period earlier on in the spring. Brondby clinched the Cup in a dramatic Final, beating Midtjylland 3-2 after extra-time, and then thrashed nearest League challengers FC Copenhagen 5-0. They were eight points clear with three games to go.

Morten Skoubo put Brondby ahead against Midtjylland just before half-time, but they then went 2-1 down on goals from Michael Hansen and Razak Pimpong after the break. It was only when Pimpong was sent off in the 66th minute that Brondby recovered their composure. Kim Daugaard equalised with 14 minutes remaining and substitute Ruben Bagger scored the winner nine minutes from the end of extra-time.

Buoyed by this victory, Laudrup's side put in their most stirring performance of the season to overcome FC Copenhagen and put the championship within reach.

Copenhagen, who won the Double last season, gained some consolation by beating IFK Gothenburg of Sweden on penalties in the Final of the inaugural Royal League tournament.

Jim Holden

NORWAY

What a Start!

Newly-promoted Start have been the revelation of the opening weeks of the season, taking top spot in the League with 19 points from eight games on the back of some attractive and exciting performances.

Among the stars of the Kristiansand-based club is 23-year-old left-back Marius Johnsen. His fine form earned him an international call-up, joining his brother Espen Johnsen, the Rosenborg goalkeeper, in the Norway set-up. Marius made a promising debut in the 1-0 friendly victory over Costa Rica in late May, as did another Start player, midfielder Kristoffer Haestad.

Start have combined attractive football with a real will to win, as they showed when coming back from 2-1 down against Brann to win 3-2 in the dying minutes.

"I just can't stop admiring my players' never-say-die attitude," said coach Tom Nordlie. "Our goal has been to avoid relegation but now I might have to change our aspirations."

By contrast, perennial champions

Rosenborg are experiencing their toughest spell for many years, having taken only nine points from their first eight games.

Sigurd Odegaard

SWEDEN

Svensson under pressure

Elfsborg's signing of international midfielder Anders Svensson from Southampton has brought the club an immediate commercial boost in terms of sponsorship money and season ticket sales. However, since the move was clinched, Elfsborg have slipped to the bottom of the table, putting Svensson under even more pressure to perform well when he begins playing for the Boras-based club in July. Elfsborg have recently moved to a new stadium and relegation would be a serious blow indeed.

"Of course, I want to help Elfsborg to get better results, but this is a team game and one player cannot do everything," said Svensson.

Pentti Hietanen

LATVIA

Metalurgs march on

Last year's League runners-up, Metalurgs Liepaja, showed they mean to go one better by opening up a four-point lead after going nine games unbeaten from the start of the season.

The national team lost 2-0 away to Lithuania in Kaunas in the Baltic Cup. Latvian coach Jurijs Andrejevs opted to use a squad largely comprising young, domestic League players, with Andrejs Stolcers the only first-team regular. The Baltic Cup normally also includes Estonia, but they withdrew, claiming the invitation from the Lithuanian FA came too late.

Andres Must

ESTONIA

Levadia repeat Cup feat

Levadia Tallinn beat Tallinna VMK in the Cup Final for the second year running, midfielder Vitali Leitan scoring the only goal four minutes from the end.

TVMK still hold the whip hand in the League, however, sitting five points clear of Levadia, their closest challengers, after 12 games and still unbeaten.

Andres Must

WALES

TNS do Double

Champions Total Network Solutions completed the Double with a 1-0 win over Carmarthen Town in the Cup Final, played at Llanelli. John Lawless scored the goal 15 minutes from full-time.

Newi Cefn Druids, who finished second bottom in the League, won a reprieve from relegation after Buckley Town, winners of the second level northern division, withdrew their application to be accepted in the top flight for financial reasons.

Afan Lido, the Premier Division's bottom side, do go down, having lost their appeal against a three-point deduction for fielding an ineligible player. The restoration of the points would have lifted them out of the relegation zone. Afan Lido are replaced by Cardiff-based Grange Harlequins, runners-up in the southern feeder division. Like Buckley, southern champions Ton Pentre declined to apply to go up.

Mel Thomas

NORTHERN IRELAND

Crusaders dismounted

Crusaders have fallen out of the top flight for the first time in 55 years after losing 3-2 on aggregate to First Division runners-up Glenavon in the relegation/promotion play-off.

Crusaders had only dropped into the play-off zone on the final day of the regular League season after losing 2-0 at home to Glentoran – a result that secured their opponents the championship – while Ards leapfrogged them by hammering Newry City 5-1. Ards achieved their escape despite going into the last game without manager Shane Reddish, who stepped down on the eve of the match. He has been replaced by George Neil, from First Division Harland and Wolff Welders.

Armagh City won the First Division unbeaten to gain promotion to the top flight for the first time. Omagh Town went down automatically.

Portadown won the Irish Cup after coming from behind to beat Larne 5-1, the biggest margin of victory in the Final for 44 years. Larne forward Robbie Weir, at 16 the youngest player to figure in the Cup Final, is set to join Sunderland.

League runners-up Linfield beat Dublin side Shelbourne 2-0 in the Final of the Setanta Cup, the new North-South competition.

Ballymena United manager Kenny Shiels was sacked after four years in charge without winning a trophy.

Roy Kitson

Niemi calls it a day

Pointing the way out...Antti Niemi

FINLAND

GOALKEEPER ANTTI NIEMI has announced his retirement from the national team with immediate effect, having earlier said he would see out the World Cup qualifying campaign.

"There is nothing dramatic about my decision," said the 33-year-old Southampton player. "But I had such a wretched winter with injuries and, of course, there was the disappointment of relegation."

Niemi, whose No 1 jersey is likely to pass to Bolton's Jussi Jaskelainen, is the country's most-capped keeper, with 66.

Pentti Hietanen

Controversial exit...Thordarson

FH hot, Keflavik rocked

ICELAND

CHAMPIONS FH continued where they left off last season, defeating Cup holders Keflavik 2-0 in the Super Cup to claim the first major silverware of the season.

Keflavik were then rocked by the departure of coach Gudjon Thordarson just three days before the start of the new League season.

Thordarson, who took over in a three-year deal last December, left claiming that the board had not fulfilled its contractual obligations. The club countered by claiming that the ex-national team coach broke his contract in order to take charge of English League Two side Notts County.

Thordarson has been replaced by assistant Kristjan Gudmundsson but the saga looks set to rumble on for some time, with the matter now in the hands of the lawyers.

A week after the furore over Thordarson, his son Johannes Karl Gudjonsson announced his international retirement at the age of just 25. The Leicester midfielder, who has won 24 caps, cited personal reasons.

Rab Christie

Daum pushed to the limit

TURKEY

Is it worth it?...Fenerbahce won the title again but the media pressure on coach Christoph Daum may drive him away

FENERBAHCE SUCCESSFULLY defended their League crown, securing the title with a 1-0 win at home to rivals Galatasaray in the penultimate round, and in the process kept coach Christoph Daum in his job.

Longevity is not a feature of the Turkish coaching scene, and a few bad results in the run-up to the title-clinching match had Daum on the ropes, pummelled by the media, who also speculated energetically about his possible successor. Admittedly, that bad run had included a 5-1 thrashing by Galatasaray in the Cup Final, but even so, the German coach had overseen Fener's domination of the League for the second season running.

The club conspicuously failed to defend their man during his media mauling, and it was only after the championship had been secured that chairman Aziz Yildirim came out to quash talk of a possible sacking.

Now Daum's job is more or less safe, it may be he who severs the ties. In an emotional news conference he made clear that the media attacks had pushed him to the limits.

"The past three or four months have been the most difficult period for me since I became a coach," said Daum. "This campaign against me had begun to brainwash the players, and it was very difficult to keep them together and ensure that they continued to listen to me."

He went on to state that, while he wanted to stay, he was seriously considering moving on, having recently received a number of job offers from other European clubs.

"You couldn't crush me or Fenerbahce. You didn't succeed," he added. "But this kind of press is making it difficult to go on living here. While I make my decision I am having to factor in how mercilessly this may continue."

Gheorghe Hagi, Daum's counterpart at Galatasaray, made a quick decision to quit despite that convincing victory over Fenerbahce in the Cup Final. The Romanian decided to stand down after his team finished only third in the table, a point behind Trabzonspor, and therefore missed out on a Champions League place in their centenary year.

Suna Erdem

CROATIA

Hajduk hang on

Hajduk Split retained the League title but in far-from-convincing style, securing it only on the final day and after a troubled spring campaign.

The run-in was marked by the shock dismissal of coach Blaz Sliskovic after Hajduk failed to win either of their first two games of the championship play-offs, and they were pushed all the way in the title race by unheralded Inter Zapresic. On top of that, Hajduk lost the Cup Final, 3-1 on aggregate to Rijeka.

That defeat put added pressure on the team to get something out of the season when it came to the final League matchday. Hajduk went into it ahead of their challengers only on goal difference and so had to win to make sure of taking the championship. In the event, they finished two points clear after thrashing Varteks 6-0 at home, while Inter were held 3-3 at Rijeka.

Remarkably, Varteks coach Miroslav Blazevic was named as Hajduk's new permanent boss after the game. Sports director Igor Stimac had held the coaching reins on a temporary basis since Sliskovic was fired. Stimac was part of the Croatia team that Blazevic led to third place at the 1998 World Cup.

Zadar were relegated in ignominious style, with their final game against Dinamo Zagreb abandoned at 7-0 down having had four players sent off. Cibalia bounced straight back to the top division after being relegated in 2004.

Zdravko Reic

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Zrinjski cruise to centenary triumph

Zrinjski celebrated their centenary by winning the championship for the first time. The Mostar side, who led from the start, were assured of the title with three games to go after taking an 11-point lead over closest challengers Zeljeznicar.

Last season's champions, Siroki Brijeg, were reduced to scrapping for third place, while they also lost 2-1

on aggregate to holders Sarajevo in the Cup Final.

Zdravko Reic

SLOVENIA

Champions Gorica miss out on Cup

HIT Gorica cruised to the League title, clinching it with several games to spare and sitting 13 points clear of second-placed Domzale with one game to go. However, they failed to do the Double after losing 1-0 to Publikum in the Cup Final. Gorica were at a disadvantage in that the game was played in Celje, Publikum's base, while the goal itself was unfortunate, Vladislav Lungul putting through his own net.

Zdravko Reic

MACEDONIA

Trophy time for Rabotnicki

Rabotnicki Kometal have won their first championship, securing the title with several games to spare. Vardar Skopje were runners-up, while Pobeda, last season's winners, could finish only third.

Baskimi won the Cup for the first time, coming from 1-0 down in the Final to beat Madzari 2-1. Baskimi had gone behind to an early Saso Aleksoski goal, but the game turned in their favour after Madzari's Dejan Georgievski was sent off. Bruno Presilski equalised with 15 minutes left then hit the winner in injury-time.

Sloga Jugomagnat, who won the title three times running between 1999 and 2001, were automatically relegated, along with Napredok.

Michel Stojmanovski

ISRAEL

Haifa by a mile

Maccabi Haifa were confirmed as champions for the fourth time in five seasons almost a month and four matches before the end of the season. In truth, Haifa had virtually tied up the title as early as February, making it one of the dullest championships for years.

Maccabi Petach Tikva finished second, their highest-ever placing, while last season's runners-up, Maccabi Tel Aviv, had a poor campaign, only managing eighth. Tel Aviv salvaged something from the season by beating Second Division Maccabi Herzliya on penalties in the Cup Final after a 2-2 draw.

The relegation battle went to the final day, with Hapoel Haifa and Hapoel Be'er Sheva eventually condemned to the drop. Hapoel Kfar Sava and Maccabi Netanya were promoted

Ori Lewis

MALTA

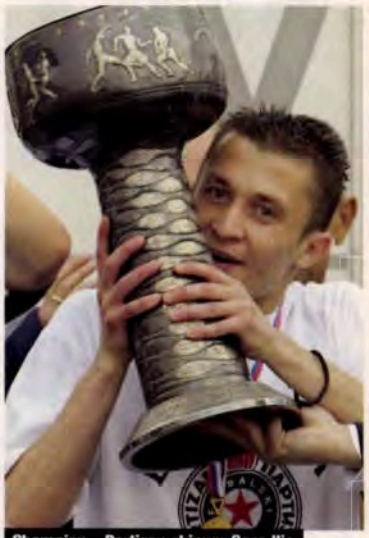
Birkirkara end Sliema's Double dreams

Champions Sliema Wanderers' hopes of a second successive Double went up in smoke when they lost on penalties to Birkirkara in the Cup semi-finals. Birkirkara, the League runners-up, went on to win the trophy for the third time in four years, beating Msida St Joseph 2-1 in the Final.

Sliema coach Edward Aquilina will stay on for another season, ending speculation he was about to quit. Aquilina has led Sliema to three successive League titles, emulating the feat he achieved as a player with them in the 1960s.

Hamrun Spartans, the First Division champions, and runners-up Mosta replace Lija Athletic and St Patrick in next season's top flight.

Domenico Aquilina



Champion...Partizan skipper Sasa Ilic

Olympiakos' Double joy

GREECE

A YEAR AFTER Panathinaikos won the Double, Olympiakos emulated the feat, seeing off their arch-rivals and AEK Athens in a tight title race and beating relegated Aris Salonika 3-0 in the Cup Final.

Olympiakos received a huge boost when their two closest challengers drew 0-0 on the penultimate weekend. A 3-0 home victory over Panionios on the same day allowed Olympiakos to leapfrog Panathinaikos at the top, and they clung on to their slender one-point lead with a 1-0 win away to Iraklis on the final day.

Still the tops...veteran Rivaldo celebrates his two-goal Cup-winning performance for Olympiakos

Veteran Brazilian Rivaldo scored the clinching goal, following his two against Aris in the Cup Final triumph, a record 21st for Olympiakos. However, the game, played at Patras's Panpeloponnisiako stadium, was marred when rival fans clashed before the match, forcing the police to use tear gas to disperse them, and once inside hurled plastic seating at one another.

A week before, Aris fans had forced the abandonment of their home League derby against Iraklis after invading the pitch and throwing tear gas canisters just before half-time. The game, which Aris were losing 2-1 at the time, was awarded 2-0 to Iraklis, and Aris had three points docked.

Tensions had been running particularly high since Aris knew they had to win to avoid relegation. The defeat and points deduction ensured that they will indeed go down, along with Ergotelis and Kerkira.

Lou Economopoulos

Partizan ascendant as Red Star burn out

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

PARTIZAN BELGRADE deservedly recaptured the League crown after the challenge of holders Red Star dwindled away.

Red Star missed virtually the last chance of catching their rivals after managing only a 1-1 home draw in the derby in April. They continued to give lacklustre performances, throwing away vital points at home to modest opposition. Partizan made sure of the title, their 19th, with two games to play when drawing 1-1 at Zeta while Red Star were losing 2-1 at home to Buducnost Podgorica.

It was the first League crown for 41-year-old coach Vladimir Vermezovic, who took the reins at Partizan in January 2004.

Red Star had denied Partizan the chance to win the Double after beating them 2-0 in the Cup semi-finals. But they threw away their chance of salvaging something from a dismal season by contriving to lose 1-0 to Zeleznik Belgrade in the Final. Zeleznik, who had never won any major honours, took the Cup despite having forward Zoran Djuraskovic sent off late on. Midfielder Dejan Radjenovic headed the winner from a free-kick in the 90th minute.

The four relegated sides are Cukaricki Belgrade, Borac Cacak, Sutjeska Niksic and Hajduk Belgrade.

Vladimir Novak

CSKA win 'hangover' game

RUSSIA

CSKA MOSCOW showed their powers of recovery by beating League leaders Spartak 3-1 away despite having spent the previous three days celebrating their UEFA Cup Final triumph over Sporting Lisbon. The following weekend they added the Russian Cup to their silverware haul, beating Second Division FC Khimki 1-0 in the Final with a goal from Yuri Zhirkov.

The players did virtually no training before the Spartak game and their public engagements to mark their UEFA Cup triumph included a champagne reception hosted by state president Vladimir Putin on the eve of meeting their Moscow rivals.

Former national coach Oleg Romantsev resigned at Dinamo Moscow after just eight games in charge. The team had made a mediocre start to the campaign, winning only nine points. Assistant Andrei Kobelev has taken the reins, and has three new foreign stars to call upon. The club signed FC Porto midfielders Maniche and Costinha, bringing to nine the number of Portuguese in the squad, and Greece right-back Giorgios Seitaridis.

New national coach Yuri Semin recalled a number of players who had faded from the international scene under his predecessor, Georgi Yartsev, for the World Cup qualifier against Latvia. Lokomotiv Moscow keeper Sergei Ovchinnikov, Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Sergei Semak and Torpedo Moscow playmaker Igor Semshov all received a call.

Victor Gusev

Yours, Mr President...Russian premier Vladimir Putin has a go at keepy-uppy at the reception to mark CSKA Moscow's UEFA Cup triumph

CZECH REPUBLIC

Sparta ease to title

Sparta Prague claimed their 33rd League championship with five games to spare to earn direct entry to the Champions League group stage. Sparta took an unassailable 18-point lead after beating Sigma Olomouc 2-0 away and then seeing arch-rivals Slavia Prague defeat second-placed Teplice by the same score two days later. Slavia eventually finished runners-up to claim a Champions League third qualifying round spot.

Sparta's triumph came despite a controversial mid-season coaching change, when the more defence-minded Jaroslav Hrebik returned to take the reins following the sacking of former playing hero Frantisek Straka. Sparta were nine points clear in the League at the time, but Straka was fired after the team picked up only one point from their six Champions League group games.

Bohemians Prague, forced to withdraw from this season's Second Division campaign following bankruptcy, are set to reform. The club plan to compete in the third tier as AFK Vrsovice, the name by which they were known until 1927.

Sam Beckwith

POLAND

Hat-trick for Wisla

Wisla Krakow won the League for the third season running after beating Gornik Zabrze 2-1 at home in the third from last round. Victory put them nine points clear of Groclin and extended their unbeaten run in home League games to 50.

Eleven days before, Wisla had set a new Polish record of 38 League matches without defeat, but this was ended in spectacular fashion with a 5-1 hammering at Legia Warsaw three days before the Gornik game.

The champions may well have to defend their title without top scorer Maciej Zurawski, who is poised to join Trabzonspor and team up with

former Wisla playmaker Miroslaw Szymkowiak, who moved to the Turkish club during the winter break.

Dariusz Kurowski

SLOVAKIA

Artmedia go down to underdogs

Artmedia Petrzalka's Double dreams were shattered when they were beaten 2-1 by Banska Bystrica in the Cup Final. Artmedia went into the game as clear favourites after an impressive run of League form. However, they put in an indifferent display against their battling opponents, who won with goals from Viktor Pecovsky and Martin Jakubko.

Artmedia recovered from that blow by beating closest League challengers Zilina 1-0 away to go six points clear with five games left. However, the game was marred by violence, with the home fans throwing bottles and stones at Artmedia manager Vladimir Weiss and Zilina boss Karol Pecze as they gave a television interview at the side of the pitch after the final whistle. Zilina are expected to be fined heavily.

Pavol Stracansky

BULGARIA

CSKA back at the top

CSKA Sofia recaptured the League title from Lokomotiv Plovdiv after beating Pirin 2-1 at home in the penultimate round. CSKA, still undefeated, had taken a decisive step towards the championship by beating their closest challengers Levski 1-0 away in late April.

Levski took some revenge by denying CSKA the Double. They beat their rivals 2-1 in a bad-tempered Cup Final, during which the champions had two men sent off and Levski one.

CSKA made an early move in the summer transfer market, bringing in national team forward Stoiko Sakaliev on a three-year contract from Naftex Bourgas.

The champions' 1-0 win at Litex Lovech during the run-in prompted the resignation of opposition coach Itzhak Shum after only 11 games in charge. The Israeli arrived with much fanfare during the winter, having led Panathinaikos to the Greek Double last term, but his new charges failed to put together a consistent run of results.

Michael Bowesfield

HUNGARY

Debrecen reach summit at last

Debrecen finally clinched their first championship, and with two games to spare, by beating bottom side Bekescsaba 5-1. Fittingly, inspirational captain Tamas Sandor scored twice, and was on the scoresheet again in the next game, a 3-1 home win over Pecs, when he accepted the League trophy in front of a full house.

The second-city side have been involved in a number of close-run title races in the past, but found the extra ingredient this season to see off major Budapest clubs Ferencvaros, MTK and Ujpest.

Ferencvaros, who did the Double last term, have suffered a financial crisis this season, and the chaos has been reflected on the pitch. Any hopes of retaining the championship were dashed after the demotivated players could only draw at home with Ujpest and Debrecen. They were then thrashed 5-1 by Matav Sopron in a controversial Cup Final, having had three players sent off. "I have never seen anything as shameful as this," commented watching national coach Lothar Matthaus.

One brighter note for Ferencvaros is that Hungary's main sports daily, *Nemzeti Sport*, and tabloid *Blikk* have come up with an investment package.

Peterjon Cresswell

BELARUS

RIPO men claim the Cup

Minsk side MTZ-RIPO won their first major trophy when beating favourites BATE Borisov 2-1 in the Cup Final. BATE quickly assumed control and went ahead after 28 minutes through Alexander Levedev. Ukrainian Denis Fedorov equalised three minutes before half-time with a spectacular volley, and national team forward Artem Kontsevoy, a former BATE player, hit the winner after the break.

The victory was particularly sweet for MTZ-RIPO coach Yuriy Puntus, who previously had an unsuccessful spell in charge of BATE.

Yuriy Shukanov, who coached Dinamo Minsk to the championship last season, was fired after only five weeks this term after his team failed to win for three successive games, losing two of them to modest opposition. The ambitious 34-year-old has been replaced by former Torpedo-SKA boss Alexander Bashmakov.

Torpedo Zhodino were the surprise League leaders after six rounds, two points clear of Dnepr Transmash.

Oleg Zadernovsky

Paying the price...Walter Zenga

Zenga fired as Steaua falter

ROMANIA

FORMER ITALY goalkeeper Walter Zenga was sacked as coach of League leaders Steaua Bucharest with just three games left after poor results put their title chances in danger.

The final straw was a 1-0 defeat away to city rivals National, ironically coached by Roberto Landi, a fellow Italian whom Zenga had recommended for the job.

The loss allowed Dinamo Bucharest to close the gap at the top to one point and meant Steaua had taken just seven points from six games.

"We part company with Walter Zenga as friends," said Steaua owner Gigi Becali. "But the coach always pays when something goes wrong."

However, the sacking angered the fans, who called for Becali to quit at the next home game. A banner, which read: "You dismissed Zenga, the only honest man at the club," was quickly seized by Becali's bodyguards.

Radu Timofte

Coach banned for abusing Serbs

Wanted by his old club...Serhii Rebrov

UKRAINE

VOLYN COACH Vitaliy Kvartsanyi was banned for the rest of the season, fined £4,000 and given a year's probation after abusing his own club's Serbian players.

The 52-year-old accused them of being "weak-willed people" after Volyn lost 1-0 away to Metalurh Donetsk and caused political embarrassment by adding: "I am asking myself how the Americans failed completely to destroy the Balkan peninsula."

Federation president Hryhory Surkis wrote to the Serbia & Montenegro ambassador apologising for the coach's comments and assuring him that any repeat by Kvartsanyi would bring a life ban.

The coach had publicly abused one of his Serb players before, saying he would cut midfielder Sasha Mitic into pieces and send them to his home after being enraged by the player's display during a game.

Kyiv Dynamo took some consolation for their likely loss of the League title to Shakhtar Donetsk by beating their rivals 1-0 in the Cup Final. Diogo Rincon scored from the penalty spot.

Meanwhile, Dynamo are angling to bring Serhii Rebrov back to the club. The forward, currently at West Ham, becomes a free agent at the end of June after a far from successful five-year stint in England. Croatia goalkeeper Stipe Pletikosa will leave Shakhtar in the summer after failing to secure a regular berth.

Oleg Zadernovsky

Then there were three

LIBERTADORES CUP

THE LIBERTADORES CUP got under way with clubs from 11 countries; the group stage and first knockout round swiftly narrowed the field. Going into the quarter-finals only representatives from Argentina (Boca Juniors, River Plate, Banfield), Brazil (Santos, Sao Paulo, Atletico Paranaense) and Mexico (Guadalajara, Tigres) remained.

Holders Once Caldas were one of three Colombian sides eliminated in the second round. They made an uncertain start to the campaign after new coach Victor Luna unwisely disrupted the defensive system by fielding three centre-backs. Normal back-four service was resumed when he was replaced by Carlos Valencia, but the side misread the implications of the away goals rule, introduced this year, sat too deep on a lead against Tigres and paid the price.

Independiente Medellin produced some sparkling spells, but lost their heads against the surprisingly dangerous Banfield, who exploited atrocious defending in the air to win both legs.

Atletico Junior also fell heavily to Argentinian opposition, but not before giving Boca Juniors a fright. Former Boca hope Omar Perez has flourished into a dynamic playmaker and burly striker Martin Arzuaga has now made the journey from promise to reality. The pair had Boca on the ropes in Barranquilla, but the Buenos Aires side hit back to draw 3-3 and comfortably win the return.

The other Colombian side, America, failed to make the second round despite winning their first three group games. A point from the remaining three would have been enough, but they buckled under pressure. America's final, decisive defeat came at home to the already-eliminated Libertad, a strong force in Paraguayan football in recent years who once again failed to make an impression at continental level.

Paraguay's other representatives, Cerro Porteno, were looking good for a title challenge until luck deserted them. Their spearhead was Santiago Salcedo, now back from a spell in Turkey. He hit nine goals to lead the competition's scorers' chart, three ahead of Arzuaga, Boca's Martin Palermo and Robinho of Santos (the latter two still have time to add).

Cerro's second-round opponents, Atletico Paranaense, lost their last group game 4-0 at home, and only qualified thanks to Libertad's shock win over America. Against Cerro, they were once more grateful for Paraguayan generosity. Cerro dominated, rattled both posts and the bar, but gave away a crazy goal to take the tie to penalties – in which the only player to miss was Salcedo.

Top gun…Santiago Salcedo led the Libertadores scoring chart with nine goals but rued a crucial penalty miss

Spanish swoop

Venezuela's clubs were unable to build on their 2004 form, being in effect the victims of their own success. Alerted to their talent, clubs in Spain and all over South America swooped on their best players, leaving them short of quality.

Events such as these indicate a clear trend; while the gap between South America's national teams is narrowing, the same is not true at club level. Indeed, it appears to be widening.

This might be more apparent if home advantage was not such a strong factor in the continent. This year's Libertadores has preserved the common South American ratio of three home wins to every away victory. Altitude, climatic differences and travelling time often mean hosts can beat superior visitors. The Bolivian sides, for example, were unbeaten in their mountain stronghold of La Paz, but failed to pick up a single point on their travels.

Peru's teams also put up a poor showing, and while Chile's were more competitive than of late – Universidad de Chile gave Santos some awkward moments in the second round – they never looked like title challengers. It was a similar story in Ecuador, although little Olmedo emerged with credit, and attractive, attack-minded LDU Quito pushed River Plate all the way in the second round.

There was more melancholy for Uruguay, once such a force in the competition, as they failed to get a team into the last 16. Danubio, inspired by midfielder Ignacio Gonzalez, had their moments but not enough to get out of a difficult group.

The real disappointments were three-times champions Nacional, the last Uruguayan team to win the trophy, in 1988. They had a disastrous campaign, and along with Argentina's San Lorenzo were the big-name casualties of the group phase.

Both had looked in splendid shape going into the competition, but re-learned one of the oldest lessons in the game – that pre-season form can be a very deceptive guide to what happens when the real stuff starts.

Tim Vickery

Telling it straight...coach Daniel Cordoba believes Olimpia have a lot to answer for

Olimpia still at ODDs

PARAGUAY

THE CRISIS AT three-times South American champions Olimpia took a new twist when club president Oscar Scavone resigned, sacked manager Daniel Cordoba – then overturned both decisions less than 24 hours later.

"I resigned because we did not have the conditions necessary for me to continue. That has now changed," said Scavone, who previously branded his administration a failure.

Olimpia, whose most recent Libertadores Cup triumph came only three years ago, finished bottom of the 2004 closing championship and were only eighth out of 10 in this year's opening campaign with 12 points from 13 games. This was not the form expected from a team known as the King of Cups or the Deacon.

Olimpia have been attempting to rebuild since former president Oswaldo Dominguez Dibb – known simply as ODD – left two years ago, ending a stormy 30-year reign during which he effectively financed the team himself.

The club won all their Libertadores titles under ODD, who eventually became more interested in politics than the club. In 2003, he failed to win the Colorado Party candidature for the presidential elections and was accused of mixing football and politics as he displayed the Libertadores trophy at campaign rallies.

By that time, Olimpia were deep in debt. At one stage, they had their telephones cut off for non-payment of bills. Most of the 2002 Libertadores-winning team had left, and when ODD departed, the club were forced to turn to the youth team.

Cordoba, who became the second coach of the year when replacing Gustavo Benitez in February, launched an astonishing attack on the club after a 2-0 defeat by 3 de Febrero.

"Nobody here thinks about tomorrow, and this club has been a disaster for the past three years," he said. "The great Olimpia has to look back, eat some humble pie and admit they made mistakes."

Brian Homewood

Mr Motivator lands top job

PERU

FREDDY TERNERO, who three years ago was scratching a living as a house painter, gardener and odd-job man in the United States, has been named as Peru coach, replacing Brazilian Paulo Autori. He will be in charge for the remainder of the World Cup qualifying competition.

Ternero made his name in 2003 as coach of Cienciano when they became the first Peruvian club to get their hands on an international trophy by winning the Sudamericana Cup, a sort of South American UEFA Cup.

The achievement was even more remarkable given that Cienciano, from the Andean city of Cusco, are regarded as the poor relations of Lima trio Alianza Lima, Sporting Cristal and Universitario.

Ternero will need to use his considerable motivational powers with the national team since they are notorious for freezing on the big occasions.

At Cienciano, Ternero made his players karate chop blocks of wood with their bare hands to teach them the powers of positive thinking. Not afraid to lead by example, Ternero himself walked barefoot over fire without feeling burnt as part of the same course run by motivation consultants, which, he said, boosted the players' spirit and faith in themselves.

"Peruvian players generally settle for very little...they don't care if they win or lose, and that's something I'm trying to change, because I believe they have the ability to fight on equal terms anywhere in the world," Ternero said at the time.

Ternero played mostly for Universitario but ended at Cienciano, where he was given vouchers to spend at a supermarket in lieu of three months' pay. When he went to cash them in, the supermarket had gone bust. He then spent a year in the USA doing odd jobs before returning home to try his luck at coaching.

Alianza Lima and Sporting Cristal both parted company with their Argentinian coaches. Ruben Dario Insua left Alianza after a 2-1 defeat at Sport Ancash and was replaced by Wilmer Valencia. Edgardo Bauza was fired by Cristal, who brought in Jose Del Solar, the former Tenerife and Peru midfielder. That angered a lot of Cristal fans as Del Solar has always been associated with Universitario.

The latter, coached by former Argentina World Cup player Jose Basualdo, led the opening championship just after the halfway stage.

Brian Homewood

Pride in the shirt...Ternero (left) with federation president Manuel Burga

Boca win 'irrelevant' derby

ARGENTINA

Heads, I win...Boca's Marcelo Delgado challenges Horacio Ameli of River Plate during the big Buenos Aires derby

BOCA JUNIORS recorded a feisty 2-1 victory over River Plate in Argentina's biggest club fixture, but for once the outcome is likely to have little bearing on the destination of the title. Despite winning, Boca were still mired in mid-table, having lost six of their first 14 closing campaign games. River, who had topped the table at one stage, were only fourth, behind Velez Sarsfield, Estudiantes and Racing Club.

River had more of the game, played at Boca's Bombonera stadium, with midfielder Javier Mascherano the best player on the field. However, Boca goalkeeper Roberto Abbondanzieri was in superb form, and despite carrying an injury, kept River at bay. Guillermo Barros Schelotto put Boca ahead in the 13th minute, with Luis Gonzalez equalising just after half-time. Marcelo Delgado hit the winner nine minutes from time.

"We won because the players ran themselves into the ground," said Boca coach Jorge Benitez, while it was clear River felt they had been robbed. Midfielder Marcelo Gallardo summed up the mood when saying: "We were superior to Boca throughout."

But the truth is that neither of the country's Big Two appears up to the task in the current championship. Both had claimed the Libertadores Cup would be their main priority, but had also expressed determination to battle for League supremacy.

Boca's defensive errors have cost them dear this season. "Many mistakes come from high balls and the team suffers when [tall central defender] Rolando Schiavi is not on his game," says former international Juan Simon. "But you cannot expect a player always to be in top form. Also, when the full-backs move into attack, midfielder Fernando Gago does not drop back to cover, as [Mauricio] Serna used to do."

River Plate, meanwhile, have hardly been helped by an off-field dispute over money between defenders Horacio Ameli and Eduardo Tuzzio.

The coaching merry-go-round has continued to turn, with nine having fallen off during the course of the closing campaign. The most recent departure was that of Gustavo Alfaro, who left Quilmes in disgust when the players refused to train in protest at not being paid their wages.

Things also turned sour for Hector Viera, a hero as a player at San Lorenzo but unable to stop the club's slide towards the bottom of the table. The team also finished bottom of their Libertadores Cup group, without a win in six games. Although the fans stayed loyal to Viera, he was not popular with several players, who were even rumoured to have played badly to ensure his departure. Their denial was difficult to believe when only three days after youth team coach Gabriel Rodriguez succeeded Viera, San Lorenzo looked a totally different side in beating River Plate 3-1.

Eric Weil

OBITUARIES

Entertainer…Tenorio was known for his 'Spiderman' goal celebrations

TWO LATIN AMERICAN internationals have died following car crashes.

Ecuador striker Otilino Tenorio died only three days after playing in a 1-0 friendly win over Paraguay in New Jersey when his car was in collision with a lorry between Quito and Guayaquil. The 25-year-old had been given the weekend off by his club, El Nacional, as he was suspended.

Costa Rica's Whayne Wilson, who had managed to play his way into the national side at the age of 29, died in hospital four days after an accident, also involving a lorry, between San Jose and the Caribbean coast.

Tenorio's first club were Guayaquil's Emelec, whom he joined at 11, and then, having shown much promise, he moved to Saudi Arabia to play for Al Nassr.

Like many South Americans, he found the move tough, lost his chances of playing in the national team and, after a generally unhappy time, returned to his homeland this year.

Tenorio, who was generally used as a reserve by his country, earned his nickname Spiderman for his flamboyant goal celebrations, during which he danced around the pitch wearing the character's mask which he pulled from his shorts.

Wilson, who spent his career with various clubs in his homeland, started the two March World Cup qualifiers, against Panama and Trinidad & Tobago, and had turned down recent offers to play in China because his dream was to play in the World Cup and he feared the move would harm his chances of keeping his place in the team.

He scored all four of his international goals this year, three in the CONCACAF Gold Cup qualifying tournament, played in Guatemala in February, and a penalty in a 2-1 win over Panama.

Brian Homewood

ROUND-UP

VENEZUELA: UA Maracaibo have won the championship for the first time. The team from the oil city of the same name won both the opening and closing tournaments and their campaign included a 27-match unbeaten run.

BOLIVIA: Bolivar's players refused to travel to their Libertadores Cup tie away to Santos because they said they were owed three months' wages. They eventually backed down but had to travel on the day of the game, leaving La Paz on a 7.30am flight to arrive in Sao Paulo six hours later. After a two-hour bus trip to Santos, they arrived one hour 20 minutes before kick-off. Santos won 6-0 and coach Vladimir Soria resigned.

Aurora's players also went on strike after the club said they had to take a pay cut because the wage bill was too high. The Cochabamba club were forced to field a youth team for the game at San Jose, where they crashed 6-0.

ECUADOR: Deportivo Quito accused a referee of being intimidated by a crowd riot after he reversed a decision to allow a goal to stand during the 2-1 defeat at bottom club Deportivo Quevedo. Rolando Jacome thought he had given Quito a 2-1 lead in the 67th minute and referee Luis Vasco signalled a goal. Play was then held up for about 10 minutes as local fans hurled assorted missiles on to the field. Just as play was about to restart, Vasco bizarrely disallowed the goal and Quevedo went on to score a late winner.

It was only the second win in 13 opening campaign matches for the promoted side. Quevedo have already got through four coaches this year, while their five foreign players – including former Bolivia star Julio Baldivieso – have all quit. LDU led the table, six points clear of El Nacional.

COLOMBIA: Independiente Medellin played two games on the same evening thousands of kilometres apart and lost them both – the first team 3-0 away to Argentina's Banfield in the Libertadores Cup and the reserves 3-1 at Tolima in the semi-final group stage of the domestic opening championship. The Colombian League scheduled two rounds of games a week in the semi-final groups, forgetting that Libertadores Cup games are also played in midweek.

CHILE: Union Espanola's Argentinian goalkeeper Ignacio Gonzalez has been banned for 22 matches, prompting him to leave the club, after punching referee Enrique Osses to the ground during a 2-1 defeat by Union San Felipe. Gonzalez, 33, was angered by what he saw as the unjustified awarding of a free-kick on the edge of the area. The keeper, who had just taken a year away from the game for family reasons, said: "When I was walking back to the dressing-room, I realised what I had done."

Brian Homewood

Busy night…Independiente Medellin (red) take on Banfield in the Libertadores Cup

Arena launches long ball

UNITED STATES

Clash of styles...Clint Dempsey and Joe Cole collide during the USA-England game in Chicago

THE USUAL MOUNTAIN of irrelevant nonsense surrounded the USA's friendly against England in Chicago. Much of it was designed to obscure the fact that England had sent their reserves, while the US had chosen to rest a few key players.

So the USA's not-quite-A team lost 2-1 to England's very-definitely-B team, a result that ought to have embarrassed coach Bruce Arena, but did not. He professed himself well satisfied and "pleased with the team's effort in the second half".

But Arena's complacency cannot cover the fact that this was a woefully commonplace performance by the Americans. The method of attack was to send a constant barrage of long balls into the English penalty area – hardly the sort of stuff that is going to cause too much alarm among English defenders.

But this was only a friendly and everyone's eyes were on the pending World Cup qualifiers against Costa Rica and Panama. So were these tactics a warm-up for a similar blitz on the Costa Ricans?

Certainly, that was the thinking of Costa Rica coach Alexandre Guimaraes. After a recent 1-0 loss in a friendly against Norway in Oslo, he remarked: "I wanted to play them to get used to high crosses, because that's the way the USA will play against us."

If Arena's long-ball tactics against England were indeed aimed more at Costa Rica, it is a damning indictment of the USA's ability to play in a more intelligent style. Costa Rica have a tradition of skilful soccer, but it ought to be well within the US squad's capabilities to match them at that game.

A further dose of nonsense was supplied by continual talk of the World Cup qualifiers being "crucial". In fact, the possibility of the USA failing to finish in the top three of CONCACAF's six-team final qualifying group can be dismissed out of hand.

The USA will be in Germany, playing, it is to be hoped, something rather more refined than a route-one style that abjures creative midfield play.

At the root of the USA's midfield dilemma is their continued shortage of playmakers. Claudio Reyna is usually given that role, and it was evidently his inability to play in the Costa Rica game that brought on Arena's sudden use of the long ball. The obvious alternative to Reyna is Landon Donovan, but against England he was used more as a forward.

That left the midfield duties to Steve Ralston and Clint Dempsey – both reliable and skilful, but hardly creative – and workhorse Kerry Zavagnin.

Nor can it be said that the US defence is looking invulnerable. Eddie Pope, for so long rock-solid in the centre, has slipped badly. He made two bad errors against England, and both led to goals.

Up front things have a brighter look because of the emergence of 20-year-old Eddie Johnson, who has speed, strength and superb finishing ability. His arrival is perfectly timed, as Brian McBride is fading. A pairing of Johnson with the intelligent Josh Wolff promises well for the USA – always providing it is backed by intelligent service from midfield.

Paul Gardner

Blanco is America's hero

MEXICO

VETERAN playmaker Cuauhtemoc Blanco sealed an inspirational campaign by scoring in both legs of America's closing championship Final victory over Tecos UAG.

The 32-year-old scored from a late penalty in the first leg at Tecos to secure a 1-1 draw then hit the fourth of an amazing 6-3 victory in the return.

Blanco played a central role in the championship triumph, supplying prolific forwards Kleber and Claudio Lopez as well as getting among the goals himself. It was a far cry from last year, when he was loaned to Veracruz when deemed surplus to requirements by then coach Oscar Ruggeri.

Blanco has flourished since returning to America, despite his doubts about working under former national coach Manuel Lapuente, appointed as technical director.

America were far from convincing in the league stage of the campaign, only sneaking into a play-off place by winning their last two games. They were plagued by defensive problems, which would have looked worse if it had not been for outstanding teenage keeper Guillermo Ochoa.

But they looked far better in the play-offs, thrashing favourites Cruz Azul 6-2 on aggregate before that second-leg goal glut against Tecos.

The latter did well to reach the Final having started the league stage in danger of relegation – based on a team's record over a number of championships. Tecos then scraped past Morelia 2-1 in the semi-finals.

Cruz Azul were the most entertaining side in the league stage but their defeat by America climaxed a nine-game run without a win.

Carlos Ramirez

Top men...title winners Blanco and Pavel Pardo

Al Ahly a class apart

EGYPT

FEW SIDES HAVE been able to put together as fluent a run as that of Al Ahly in Egypt over the past season. The Cairo side not only had the satisfaction of taking the League title away from hated rivals Zamalek, and by a massive margin, but they did so without losing a game.

Inspirational...Mohamed Barakat

Al Ahly won their first 17 games, and ended up dropping only four points in the entire 26-match campaign. They secured the championship no fewer than four months before the final game and finished 31 points clear of second-placed ENPPI. There was the added satisfaction of 4-2 and 3-0 wins over Zamalek, who trailed in 38 points adrift.

The catalysts for the near-perfect season were the return of Portuguese coach Manuel Jose, formerly with Benfica and Belenenses, and the inspirational form of international midfielder Mohamed Barakat, a new signing.

Al Ahly were also helped by Zamalek's panicky start to the season. The 11-times champions had high hopes of winning another at the start of the campaign following the appointment of Dragan Stepanovic, a veteran of the Bundesliga coaching circuit. But he was fired after just eight matches when Al Ahly started running away from Zamalek in the standings.

In his stead came Roberto Carlos Cabral, better known as Cabralzinho, who was at the helm when Zamalek won the African Champions League in 2002. But the diminutive Brazilian's magic touch eluded him in his second spell and Zamalek began a free fall to finish in only sixth place, their lowest final position. Indeed, they had only previously finished outside the top four in 1949 and 1975. Cabralzinho has now been replaced by German Theo Bucker.

All that Zamalek could salvage from a miserable season was qualification for the group stage of the African Champions League, in which Al Ahly are potential opponents later on in the competition.

It was Al Ahly's first title in four years and puts them among the favourites for the Champions League. The group phase begins in late June.

Mark Gleeson

Referee beaten up by fans

AFRICAN CONFEDERATION CUP

VIOLENCE AGAIN reared its ugly head in African club competition as Enugu Rangers supporters beat up the referee after their side's elimination from the African Confederation Cup.

Although the Nigerian team defeated Royal Armed Forces of Morocco 2-1 in their home, second leg encounter, they exited the competition on away goals.

The drama unfurled after Enugu supporters claimed a last-gasp shot by one of their players had crossed the goal-line before being cleared. Malian referee Komlan Coulibaly waved play on, however, prompting aggrieved home fans to run on to the pitch and punch him to the ground. Riot police rescued the three match officials and the Ghanaian match commissioner, Alhaji Jawula.

Scenes likes this are common these days, particularly in volatile west Africa. In Kumasi, Ghana, the referee had to be protected from angry Red Arrows players after awarding two penalties against the Zambian champions as they lost 4-3 on aggregate to King Faisal Babes.

Nigerian champions Dolphin FC proved their strength by easily beating SuperSport United of South Africa 6-3 on aggregate, while Tunisia's AS Marsa and Gabon's army side FC 105 Libreville were two surprise qualifiers. Marsa's defeat of USM Alger spelt the end for the latter's coach, former Algerian international Djamel Menad.

The eight qualifiers now enter a league stage, which kicks off in late July.

Mark Gleeson

ROUND-UP

NORTH AFRICA

● Ilija Loncarevic has returned to coach LIBYA for a second spell. He was fired last July and then worked briefly at Dinamo Zagreb in his native Croatia.

● Hans-Dieter Schmidt has taken over from Turk Muhsin Ertugral as coach of EGYPTIAN side Ismaili.

● CS Sfaxien won the TUNISIAN championship on goal difference from Etoile Sahel to end Esperance's seven-year reign. Etoile went into their final game without a coach following the resignation of Ammar Souayeh. Brazilian coach Paolo Rubim has left CA Bizerte.

● Fakhreddine Rajhy has returned to coach MOROCCO'S Wydad Casablanca, replacing Frenchman Jacky Bonnevay.

CENTRAL AFRICA

● Operarios are champions of SAO TOME E PRINCIPE after beating Udescai de Agua Ize 5-4 on penalties in the title play-off. The game itself was a 2-2 draw after extra-time. The Final is played between the winners of the leagues on the two islands that make up the territory.

EAST AFRICA

● Sports Club Villa of Uganda won the EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP for the second time in three years by beating reigning champions APR FC of Rwanda 3-0 in the Final. Robert Ssentongo opened the scoring on the stroke of half-time, with Kenyan import Bernard Mwalala scoring twice after the break. Rwanda's Rayon Sport beat Tanzanian hosts Mtibwa Sugar 4-2 on penalties in the bronze-medal match.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

● Kaizer Chiefs retained the League title in SOUTH AFRICA having at one stage trailed arch-rivals Orlando Pirates by nine points. The sides were level on points going into the final game, but while Chiefs won 2-0 away at Bloemfontein Celtic, Pirates were held to a 1-1 draw by Umtata Bush Bucks. Wits University were relegated after 28 years in the top flight.

WEST AFRICA

● Gambia won the AFRICAN UNDER-17 CHAMPIONSHIP with a late goal from captain Ousmane Sankou in the Final against Ghana. But the tournament was marred yet again by obvious age cheating.

Back in Libya...Loncarevic

● Sporting Bissau clinched the League championship in GUINEA-BISSAU by beating Portos Bissau 1-0 in their last match of the season to finish ahead of Atletico Bissora.

Mark Gleeson

Pressure play...Ahmad Al-Mahijri of Al Ain is shadowed by Sepahan's Hassan Zadeh Reza and Mohsen Benkar during the 3-2 Group B win

Favourites Suwon fail

ASIAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

PRE-TOURNAMENT FAVOURITES Suwon Bluewings joined Japanese duo Jubilo Iwata and Yokohama F Marinos as the big-name casualties in the group stage of the Asian Champions League. The South Korean champions lost 1-0 on the final matchday away to Chinese counterparts Shenzhen Jianlibao, who took the quarter-final spot as Group E winners. Jubilo finished third despite beating Shenzhen 3-0 at home in the penultimate round.

Shenzhen reached the last eight under caretaker coach Guo Ruilong following the dismissal of Qi Shangbin because of the club's poor start to the domestic season, lying bottom after nine games.

Qi claimed he had been pushed out as a result of player power, since the squad did not like the fact that he was trying to clean up their act. "Shortly after taking over, I saw a lot of unhealthy habits among the players," he said. "There was too much drinking, too much night life and gambling. That was why I decided to take stricter actions to keep the team fit. Even at the very beginning, some players were out very late drinking and having fun, and when I tried to phone them, they didn't even bother to take or return my calls."

Shenzhen were joined in the knockout phase by compatriots Shandong Luneng, who finished top of Group F with maximum points, ahead of J.League champions Marinos. Shandong rounded off with a 2-1 victory over Takeshi Okada's team in the penultimate round and a 4-0 win away to Thailand's BEC Tero Sasana, finalists in 2003.

"A lot of people were shocked that we qualified ahead of Yokohama F Marinos, but it was not a big surprise for us," said Shandong assistant coach Miodrag Radovic. "We prepared a long time in advance for the games against Yokohama and knew their strengths and weaknesses. We have already started collating information on the other quarter-finalists and will be well prepared, whoever we are drawn against."

The other teams through to the knockout phase are South Korean FA Cup holders Busan I'Park, who like Shandong qualified with a 100 per cent record from Group G, Al Ahli of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates' Al Ain, Qatar's Al Sadd and Paas of Iran, as well as defending champions Al Ittihad of Saudi Arabia, who received a bye.

The major surprise in the western half of the draw was the failure of twice Champions League semi-finalists Pakhtakor to reach the last eight. The Uzbek side lost out to Al Ahli in Group D.

Al Ain, the 2003 Asian champions, made it safely through with a 3-2 win over Iran's Sepahan in the final round to top Group B. Coached by former Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Oman manager Milan Macala, the club relinquished their domestic title to Al Wahda but still had enough in the locker to keep alive hopes of a second continental title in three years.

Paas progressed as winners of Group A ahead of Kuwait's Al Salmia, while the Bora Milutinovic-coached Al Sadd took their place in the last eight by seeing off Uzbekistan's Neftchi in Group C.

The draw for the quarter-finals will be made in Kuala Lumpur on June 15.

Michael Church

Karimi joins Bayern

IRAN

ASIAN PLAYER of the Year Ali Karimi has joined Bayern Munich in a one-year deal after three years in the United Arab Emirates with Al Ahli. The 26-year-old becomes the third Iranian to join the Bundesliga champions, after Ali Daei and Vahid Hashemian. Karimi will be offered the option of a second season at Bayern should he impress coach Felix Magath.

"Ali Karimi is a pacy, dynamic and dangerous attacking player," said Magath. "As Asian Player of the Year he is an interesting candidate for Bayern. I am delighted to have him in my squad for the new season."

Karimi, though, will have to adapt to life in Munich without any compatriots after the transfer of Hashemian to Bundesliga rivals Hannover on a three-year contract. Hashemian earned the nickname 'The Helicopter' because of his aerial prowess while with previous German club Bochum.

Michael Church

New boy...Karimi has the chance to impress in the Bundesliga

Sydney sink Mariners

OCEANIA

SYDNEY FC reached the final stages of the OCEANIA CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP by beating Central Coast Mariners 1-0 in the Final of the Australian preliminary competition. David Carney, who won the 2002 FA Youth Cup with Everton alongside Wayne Rooney, scored in the 18th minute. Mariners lost any hope of salvaging the match when Andrew Clark was sent off.

● Holders Miramar Rangers were knocked out of NEW ZEALAND'S Chatham Cup 3-2 by unheralded local rivals North Wellington. Favourites Central United began with a record-equalling 21-0 annihilation of Norwest then beat Oratia 6-0.

● Ba retained FIJI'S FA Cup with a 1-0 win over home side Nadi.

Paul Moon

Oguro stakes his claim

JAPAN

GAMBA OSAKA forward Masashi Oguro is fast emerging as one of Japan's biggest hopes for next year's World Cup finals, presuming they qualify. The 25-year-old, League top scorer last year with 20 goals, is leading the way again this season with 10 in the first 12 games.

Oguro, the sort of natural poacher Japan have long been seeking, got off the mark in only his second international, with a late winner against North Korea in February's World Cup qualifier.

There is plenty of competition for the strikers' slots, with Takayuki Suzuki and Keiji Tamada apparently in pole position and Tatsuhiko Kubo about to return after a long injury. But Oguro is surely in the frame. "I feel sharper and the goals show I'm going better than last year," he says.

The pressure was on national coach Zico to give Oguro a run in the three-team Kirin Cup but he started only the second game, against the United Arab Emirates. Japan lost this 1-0, having gone down by the same score in the opening game, against Peru.

Struggling Kashiwa Reysol have been hit with a record J.League fine of £50,000 following crowd trouble during their 2-0 home defeat by Nagoya Grampus Eight in April. Reysol fans invaded the Grampus end, leading to a pitched battle.

Ex-Brazil coach Emerson Leao made an impressive start with bottom club Vissel Kobe, who beat Grampus Eight 2-0. But he arrived just in time to bid farewell to Cameroonian Patrick Mboma, the club's most famous striker. The 34-year-old, League top scorer with Gamba Osaka in 1997 and 2000 African Footballer of the Year, is retiring and was given a send-off at the League Cup match against Omiya Ardija. Mboma joined Vissel last year from Tokyo Verdy.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

Heading for the top...Oguro

ASIAN ROUND-UP

● Record title winners Dalian Shide held a one-point lead in CHINA after 10 rounds but had missed the chance to go further clear after losing 2-1 to bitter rivals Shanghai Shenhua.

● Brothers Union won the BANGLADESH Federation Cup, and a place in next year's AFC Cup, with a 1-0 win over Muktijoddha KC in the Final. Moroccan striker Adil Okero scored the winner in the sixth minute.

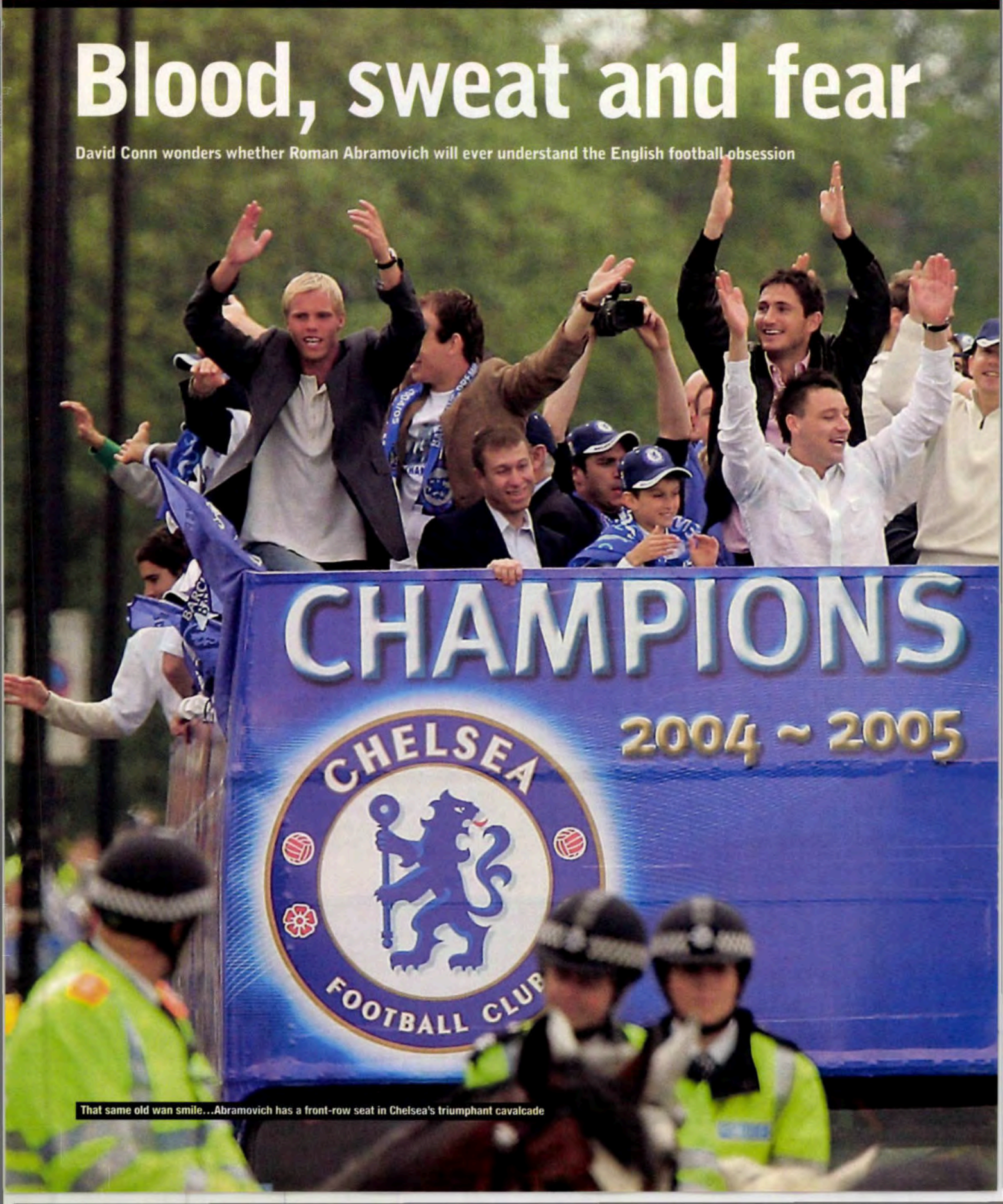
● Al Hilal won SAUDI ARABIA'S Crown Prince Cup for the fifth time by beating Al Qadisiya 2-1 in the Final. It was Hilal's second major title of the season after beating Al-Ittifaq in the Prince Faisal ibn Fahd Cup Final.

● Foolad were in touching distance of lifting the IRANIAN League title, needing three points from their final two matches to make sure.

● Federation Cup holders Dempo SC have added the INDIAN National League title to their haul of silverware. The Goan club finished two points clear of local rivals Sporting Clube.

● Sun Hei retained the HONG KONG League title, beating Fukien 1-0 while challengers Happy Valley could only draw with Kitchee.

Michael Church & Azam Mahmood



Blood, sweat and fear

David Conn wonders whether Roman Abramovich will ever understand the English football obsession

That same old wan smile...Abramovich has a front-row seat in Chelsea's triumphant cavalcade

WAVES OF RED, swamping two-thirds of Istanbul's Ataturk stadium with flags, noise and ultimately tears, Liverpool's sweaty, on-penalties Champions League comeback victory against Milan was a televisual pageant, a celebration of the English love affair with football.

Jamie Carragher and Steven Gerrard, the only two Liverpudlians in the side, strained every ligament to match the Liverpool achievements they watched on TV when they were boys. As the team snaked through the crowds with the cup on the emotional journey through Liverpool the following day, it was impossible to think of anything else in modern British life that could so stop a city, have men crying unembarrassed, declaring the day the very best of their whole lives.

In England since the 1990s, football has mushroomed in importance; much more than a sporting passion, support for a club is central to many people's lives now, embodying like nothing else their roots, background, their sense of very identity. Partly this is down to media hype in the Premiership age, but it is perhaps also true that the English have football so proudly "in the blood" partly because other ways in which people define themselves – family, region, religion, politics – are weak and fragmented here.

A general election came and went in May, providing another reminder that unlike in other countries – like Italy, where Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's popularity was borne on the triumphs of Milan – football's unique tribal power has never been successfully exploited politically in Britain. The Conservative leader, Michael Howard, made faintly cringe-making remarks about supporting Liverpool, but to no electoral warmth. Tony Blair no longer even bothers to strain credulity with claims of lifelong support for Newcastle. Football exists here above politics, larger than life.

Instead, as Malcolm Glazer joltingly reminded us, English fans' lifelong loyalty for their clubs has, from professional football's beginnings, been mined by businessmen, mostly looking for fame, or, more recently, money. Roman Abramovich has been the most spectacular, with a total outlay of £250million in buying debt-soaked Chelsea in the summer of 2003, including an initial £111m to sign players, a manager, Jose Mourinho, on a reported £10m a year, a chief executive, Peter Kenyon, paid an unprecedented £3.5m, then another round of signings: Didier Drogba, Arjen Robben, Petr Cech, and Ricardo Carvalho, all bankrolled by the Russian billionaire.

And still we are no nearer a grown-up answer to the obvious question – why?

We are told by Abramovich's PR people – the man himself won't talk to the media – that Roman simply fell in love with the beautiful game one floodlit night at Old Trafford, and had to buy his own club, a weird take itself on football passion. All season, we were asked to believe in Roman's romance – Frank Lampard, most notably, repeated the claim – yet what we know of Abramovich reveals he grew up a solitary orphan in desperate circumstances, with no interest in football.

When Abramovich's millions finally produced their inevitable return, the Premier League title, there he was on the pitch, champagne dribbling down his head and jacket, smiling his impenetrable smile alongside Lampard and John Terry, who, unlike him but like Carragher and Gerrard, really were realising childhood dreams.

Bandit capitalism

In the last, agonising, added-on minutes of Chelsea's Champions League semi-final second leg at Anfield, with Liverpool hanging on by their 1-0 thread, the TV cameras cut to Abramovich in the crowd. There he was, in the tensest of moments for Chelsea fans, seemingly untouched, smiling his same wan smile. It made you wonder: can Abramovich really care much about 22 blokes kicking a football? If you have become a billionaire in the bandit capitalism of Russia after communism, can you possibly invest a mere game with the same importance?

We still know little about the deals Abramovich pulled early in his rise, except that in aluminium and oil, softies did not prosper. We are, however, familiar with the deal that made his unfeasible fortune, the 'loans for shares' scandals, in which President Boris Yeltsin sold off Russia's state-owned resources at a fraction of their true worth to a few individuals, Abramovich included, who had bankrolled Yeltsin's political survival. Abramovich bought Sibneft, a huge Russian oil company, for £110m; it was worth vastly more and so he became a billionaire overnight. Even his spokesman, John Mann, admits the auctions were "not open", although he stresses how well Abramovich has run Sibneft; a process seen at Chelsea, too, where they are now trying to build some foundations for a proper football club.

As the champagne popped at Chelsea, the latest development in a long-running Russian story failed again to register here. Mikhail Khodorkovsky, once the richest of all Russia's oligarchs, with whose oil company, Yukos, Abramovich had planned to merge Sibneft, was jailed for nine years for fraud, embezzlement and tax evasion.

The overwhelming majority of Russians hate the oligarchs, believing their riches are ill-gotten. Having grown up with the propaganda that private property is theft, most Russians cannot abide the sudden concentration of the country's assets in so few offshore bank accounts. Vladimir Putin's government has moved against several oligarchs for various alleged crimes, and while Abramovich was buying Chelsea and becoming a global icon through the incomparable publicity vehicle of football, Khodorkovsky was being stripped of his company, liberty and money.

Abramovich would be rather more difficult for the Russian authorities to bring down. Mann rejects the idea that this was why Abramovich bought a football club – to make himself more secure by building his image around Europe and moving money out of Russia. "Roman never became involved in Russian politics," Mann told me, "so he had nothing to fear."

Whatever, it has been the shrewdest move. Here, with a few exceptions, journalists have not asked too many tough questions. Abramovich's image, courtesy of Sky TV and the tabloid newspapers' coverage of football as a glorious soap opera, has settled into a celebrity not unlike that of the more local businessmen who bought clubs in the century before him: a benign fairy godfather, with the club's interests at heart. As one Chelsea fan told BBC Radio 5 Live recently: "I don't care about anything except what happens at Stamford Bridge on a Saturday."

Yet when Abramovich wanders on to the pitch drenched in champagne, embraced in the heart of London for trickling droplets of his riches into football, it is hard not to think about his oil workers in Siberia, on their £80 a month, and wonder what they must make of it all.

'During the tensest moments for Chelsea fans, Abramovich was seemingly untouched'

North-west knows best

Howard Johnson on the heartbeat of the English game

Up with the big boys...Wigan Athletic celebrate promotion to the Premier League

POOR PRESTON NORTH END president Sir Tom Finney. This true legend of the game sat up in the stands during the play-off final at Cardiff's Millennium stadium on May 30 and you could have sworn you saw him puffing out his cheeks trying to blow the ball into the West Ham net.

Sadly for Finney – and proud Preston – it wasn't to be. Billy Davies' men came up just that little bit short and it will be Alan Pardew's Hammers back in the Premier League next season after their 1-0 win. The statisticians will be almost as disappointed as Preston's fans. Had the Lancashire club made it back to the top flight for the first time in 44 years there would have been eight clubs from the North-west competing in the elite league.

It's an interesting curio, certainly, but what it also makes you wonder is this. Given the professional game as we know it is almost unrecognisable from the one Finney participated in back in the 1940s and 1950s, how is it that this traditional footballing hotbed has managed to retain its place and position so effectively?

If you look at today's Premier League line-up, then compare it with the old First Division of 50 years ago, you might well be surprised at what you find. How many teams from the North-west in season 1954-55? You guessed it. Seven. Manchester United, Manchester City, Burnley, Everton, Preston, Bolton and Blackpool.

Admittedly, there were 22 teams in the top flight at that time. But the overall point remains the same. We've had the abolition of the maximum wage and the advent of the Bosman era, an influx of sponsorship and TV rights, mass media and the dawn of the pop-star footballer.

'The region is punching way above its weight'

Manchester City, Everton, Manchester United, Liverpool, Bolton Wanderers, Blackburn Rovers, Wigan Athletic and Preston North End. They would have made up a massive 40 per cent of the 20-team division. And yet even without the plucky presence of Preston, seven clubs in the top flight still represents an astonishing geographical dominance from just one small part of the country.

On the surface you'd have to say that nothing remains of football's old ways, traditions and values. And yet it's the long-time powerhouse of working class footballing support, the North-west, that still provides many of the best of the modern-day teams. This, despite a whole host of negatives, which on paper would surely have seen its dominance relegated to the realms of sepia-tinted history.

The North-west's economic might – built throughout the 19th century on the back of the industrial revolution – has long since been eroded. The area's population is dwarfed by London too. And given the opportunities open to the world's very best footballers today, the rainy North-west has very little to offer in terms of glamour appeal and quality of life. When was the last time a genuinely established world-class player signed for a North-west club? Remember Ronaldinho?

Yet despite all these naturally-occurring negatives, the North-west is punching way above its weight. You could argue Chelsea won last season's Premier League at a canter and Arsenal did the same the season before. But Manchester United have always been there or thereabouts. Then there's also the small matter of England's only two Champions League winners to date, United in 1999 and – who will ever forget? – Liverpool in 2005.

Everton have qualified for the Champions League next season, Bolton have secured European football for the first time, Manchester City have posted their highest finish (eighth) since their return to the top flight in 2002 and Wigan have made phenomenal progress by going from bottom division to top in just a decade.

Of all the top-flight clubs from the North-west, it's only at Mark Hughes' Blackburn where you can't find a real good-news story – and even then Rovers made it to the semi-finals of this season's FA Cup, where they lost out to eventual winners Arsenal.

So why is it that the footballing tradition still holds so strong in the North-west? Could it be that when tradition, passion and heart are all hard-wired into the DNA of a football club and its surrounding community, then its subsequent power can never be underestimated? That no matter how much the footballing landscape changes, these basic human qualities will always galvanise clubs and the people who comprise them? Well, you can bet your life that's what Sir Tom Finney would tell you.

IT'S ALL GONE WRONG FOR...

MANCHESTER UNITED

A season without a single trophy won, a very expensive strikeforce that without the undeniably excellent Wayne Rooney would have been the laughing stock of the League, a few farcical spats with Chelsea (Rio Ferdinand, Jon Obi Mikel), an ongoing contractual wrangle with their star defender and a takeover by an American who has never set foot inside Old Trafford. How much more wrong could it actually go for the one-time undisputed kings of English football? Talk about an annus horribilis.

Empty-handed...Cristiano Ronaldo

Winners...Gerrard and Benitez

MEDIA WATCH

The on-off transfer of Nigerian starlet Jon Obi Mikel to...somebody

"Manchester United is delighted to announce that it has today concluded an agreement with the Norwegian club FC Lyn Oslo in respect of the central midfield player Jon Obi Mikel. Mikel, 18, was born in Plato state in Nigeria on 22 April 1987."
How it all began. Manchester United's official website trumpets the signing of Mikel on April 29

"Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson has flown to Norway in an attempt to sort out the transfer of Jon Mikel Obi, who Chelsea are now also claiming. Mikel failed to turn up for training on Thursday and NRK radio said he had been spotted at Oslo airport boarding a flight for London and a summit meeting with Chelsea. Lyn manager Morgan Andersen said they had asked police for assistance over his disappearance."
News agency AFP's Oslo office reveals that things are starting to turn into some kind of spy movie on May 12

Shirty and confused...Jon Obi Mikel

"After watching a Cup match between Lyn and Klemetsrud, Mikel drove off in an unauthorised car with his agent, John Shittu, but were followed by police and ended up hiding in nearby woods as the agent made mobile phone calls. Mikel said: 'I don't want to play for Manchester United any more. I'm not satisfied with the way Lyn have handled this case and I'm angry that they sent the police after me. I find this very degrading.' Shittu added: 'Jon Obi is angry now. We're angry at Lyn because the boy has just had his 18th birthday and has become a punch bag. It's turned into a circus with everyone.' "
The Evening Standard's Matt Hughes introduces one of the agents on May 12

"Manager Sir Alex Ferguson had planned to fly to Oslo to sort out the mess, but cancelled at the last minute when he learnt Mikel was headed the other way. Now his worst fears have been confirmed, as Mikel has said he would rather join Chelsea, and the Norwegian FA are investigating whether Mikel's contract with FC Lyn is valid."
David Hytner moves the story along on May 13 in *The Daily Express*

"United have failed to lodge any of the transfer documents with the FA, and Chelsea say they have first option on the player."
Martin Lipton explains how the plot is thickening in *The Mirror* on May 13

"[Mikel and his agent] flew to London intent on meeting with Chelsea, who have been funding Mikel at Lyn, amid claims from the player's father that his son had been 'pressured' into signing for United in a £4million deal and would seek to renege on that agreement in order to move to Stamford Bridge. 'They put too much pressure on him, that is why he signed for Manchester United,' said his father. 'He is not playing for United any more. Chelsea have been giving us money and, as his father, I say he should play for Chelsea as they have been spending money on him.' "
Duncan White tracks down Mikel's dad for *The Daily Telegraph* on May 13

"This is like watching a movie we have seen before. He is an 18-year-old boy and he was happy talking on television about signing a contract with Manchester United. We followed the rules and contacted his team. It is not the first time that a young player has signed a contract and then two days later an offer comes in of double what he has, and he says 'I was under pressure'. Do you believe he was under pressure when he signed for United? With a great club like Manchester United, you are under pressure if you don't sign yesterday, not the day after. The officials must force people to respect the rules, because if they are weak, football will end up in the jungle."
United assistant manager Carlos Queiroz gets a little hot under the collar in the *Manchester Evening News* on May 14

Michael Crick: Do you want to play for Man United?
Jon Obi Mikel: No.
MC: Why not?
JOM: Because I don't want to.
MC: Do you want to play for Chelsea?
JOM: Yeah. Because I love Chelsea. I never wanted to play for United.
MC: Why did you sign for them then?
JOM: I was forced to.
MC: Who forced you to sign for them?
JOM: Some people.
Michael Crick interviews Jon Obi Mikel for BBC 2's *Newsnight* programme on May 19

"United and Norwegians Lyn Oslo lodged a complaint with FIFA over Chelsea's pursuit of Obi on Wednesday after he said he was forced to sign for United. Obi agreed a move to United on 29 April, but since that time has performed a U-turn, insisting he had been bullied into agreeing the switch. It is a claim furiously denied by United chief executive David Gill and Oslo's sporting director Morgan Andersen. They have both signed the documents that are on their way to FIFA's headquarters in Zurich."
The BBC sports website sheds more light on the saga on May 20

IT'S ALL GONE RIGHT FOR...

LIVERPOOL

And how. Yes, there can be no denying it was a disappointing season for Liverpool in the Premiership, but who on earth's going to care about that when you've got the Champions League trophy in your cabinet? Rafa Benitez had some dodgy moments in his first season in charge on Merseyside, not least the first half in Istanbul, but the likeable Spaniard came good when it really, really mattered. Ever the perfectionist, Benitez is already talking about breaking up his winning team in search of lasting success. Does anyone now dare mention the word 'dynasty'?

TALENT SCOUT
TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

Samir NASRI

All hail Marseille's new Zidane

WHILE TALL TALES form an integral part of everyday conversation in Marseille, no one in the Provencal city needs to embroider the truth about Olympique Marseille boy wonder Samir Nasri. The 17-year-old attacking midfielder has exploded on to the Ligue 1 scene this season, providing a major consolation for his club's springtime meltdown, during which they dropped out of the Champions League qualifying spots.

The teenager is an able operator behind the strikers or wide on either flank, and his jinking runs, trickery and deft through balls have had the Stade Velodrome in raptures for months. Needless to say, scouts from Europe's top clubs are already on the case.

"Samir is the sort of player defenders hate," says Marseille central defender Abdoulaye Meite. "He provokes them with his skill, balance and speed; he loves taking them on. In a one-on-one, he always seems to come out on top. Stopping him when he's in full flow is not at all a simple task. He's a big fan of Maradona and he plays with some of the magic."

Nasri, who captained the French Under-17s to triumph in the 2004 European Championship, also seems to be the real deal in terms of attitude. "He isn't just a young player with amazing natural ability," gushes former Marseille coach Jose Anigo, the man who gave Nasri his first-team debut last September. "He has his feet on the ground too. He's taken to top-class football without blinking. He knows he can't simply rely on his brilliant technique. He accepts he has to apply himself to go far in the game.

"It's really satisfying to see a kid from Marseille join this club at the age of nine, work his way up the ladder and reach the first team. We knew we had someone very special on our hands. That's why we signed him to a pro contract as soon as we possibly could [Nasri signed a three-year deal last August]. We learnt our lesson when Mathieu Flamini was lured away by Arsenal last year."

Nasri is often compared to Zinedine Zidane, with good reason. Both come from Algerian stock, both were brought up in the northern suburbs of Marseille, both are highly gifted midfielders. "I like to keep an eye on what's happening at OM, and Nasri is someone who has really impressed me," says Zidane. "Technically, he's very strong. His creative qualities are obvious. What's more, he also seems to have an old head on his shoulders, which is very important." The new Zidane has arrived.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Marseille
Country France
Born June 26, 1987, in Marseille
Previous club Les Pennes Mirabeau
Honours European Under-17 Championship 2004

Igor AKINFEEV

CSKA'S teenage UEFA Cup-winning keeper

IF IT IS TRUE goalkeepers do not fully mature until they reach their late twenties or early thirties, then teenage CSKA Moscow starlet Igor Akinfeev is destined to be some talent in a decade or so.

Akinfeev became the youngest keeper ever to win the Fairs/UEFA Cup when, at 19 years and 40 days, he helped CSKA beat Sporting Lisbon in this season's Final. He also rates among the best young No 1s in Europe and clearly has already mastered a large part of his craft, boasting great reflexes, sound positional sense, a good command of his defence and accurate kicking.

Yet even Akinfeev would have to admit there are aspects of his game that require polishing. He has a tendency to hesitate before coming for crosses, he lacks physical presence and he has been known to lose his temper – the youngster was handed a five-match ban in 2004 for striking a Kryliya Sovetov player in retaliation and became involved in some unseemly pushing and shoving in a pre-season friendly at Saturn Ramenskoe earlier this year.

But Akinfeev is just the sort to address his weaknesses. His goalkeeping coach at CSKA, Vyacheslav Chanov, says he has never come across anyone so dedicated, while Russian national team assistant Rinat Dassayev, the former USSR keeper, is similarly impressed by the teenager's work ethic. "The first thing I noticed in Akinfeev was his healthy attitude towards his profession," says Dassayev. "He comes to training to work very hard, to push himself to the limit and he has an amazing desire to improve. It's his mentality. It's ingrained in him. He was Russia's third-choice keeper at Euro 2004 and did not play. But he still went about his training with huge intensity."

Akinfeev, a product of the CSKA academy, has always been the consummate over-achiever, playing for his club's juniors when still a schoolboy, breaking into the CSKA reserves when just 16 and making his bow for the Russian Under-21s shortly afterwards.

It was just a matter of time before he made the CSKA pro ranks and the call duly came early in the 2003 season. With first-choice keeper Veniamin Mandrykin ruled out with flu for a League game against Kryliya Sovetov, coach Valeri Gazzayev turned to young Igor, who promptly saved a penalty from Russian international midfielder Andrei Karyaka and kept a clean sheet.

Akinfeev was now in the side for keeps and soon more career milestones would be clocked up – a Russian League winner's medal with CSKA in 2003 and, just three weeks after his 18th birthday, his first senior cap in a friendly with Norway in Oslo in April last year.

All-time world goalkeeping great Lev Yashin did not play for the USSR until he was 25. Akinfeev has stolen quite a march on him.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club	CSKA Moscow
Country	Russia
Born	April 8, 1986, in Moscow
International debut	April 2004, v Norway
International caps	2
Honours	UEFA Cup 2005; Russian League 2003

Abel AGUILAR

Master midfielder set to captain Colombia

LONG GONE ARE the days when Millonarios were Colombia's all-conquering glamour team. Nowadays, they and Independiente Santa Fe, the other big Bogota club, are also-rans. Cities such as Cali and Medellin have snatched Colombia's footballing prestige away from the capital. But while Bogota clubs no longer win titles, the city has not stopped producing players. Abel Aguilar, the latest Bogota-born star, bosses midfield with an old-style class and competence that put him in the tradition of Nestor Rossi, the great Argentinian, who, in the blue of Millonarios, helped implant football in Colombia more than 50 years ago.

Aguilar, though, wears the green of Deportivo Cali. He was not snapped up by one of his hometown clubs, evidence of the lack of organisation that has left them lagging. How could they possibly have missed out on a player who travels to this month's World Youth Cup in Holland as one of the most accomplished and experienced 20-year-olds in the game?

This is his second bite at the tournament. Two years ago he was an integral part of the Colombia team that surprised by coming third in the United Arab Emirates, thus propelling coach Reinaldo Rueda into taking charge of the senior national team.

After his promotion, Rueda was keen to see if Aguilar could cope with the step up to join him at full international level, including the youngster in the experimental squad taken to last year's Copa America. The answer was yes. Aguilar made a huge impact as Colombia reached the semi-finals. There were no attempts to be flashy, just a master class in how to be simply effective. Head upright, Aguilar shielded his centre-backs, won his tackles and kept his creative team-mates supplied with clever, crisp passes. And, just as he had done with the Under-20s, he showed that he can also get on the scoresheet, drilling home shots from the edge of the area against Peru and Costa Rica.

The impression that Colombia have found a leader for the next decade was reinforced this year when Aguilar skippered them to victory on home soil in the South American Under-20 Championship.

That triumph means they travel to the World Youth Cup carrying the burdens of expectation, which has often proved a heavy load for Colombia. They will need the experience of Aguilar to cope with the euphoria. Indeed, his maturity has already played a part in getting them on the plane after a dispute with the FA over bonus payments. As captain, Aguilar was the players' representative, and he helped negotiate a settlement. "Hopefully, I can now show leadership on the field," says the man surely destined to captain Colombia's senior side.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Club Deportivo Cali
Country Colombia
Born January 6, 1985, in Bogota
International debut June 2004, v Argentina
International caps 7 (2 goals)
Honours South American Under-20 Championship 2005

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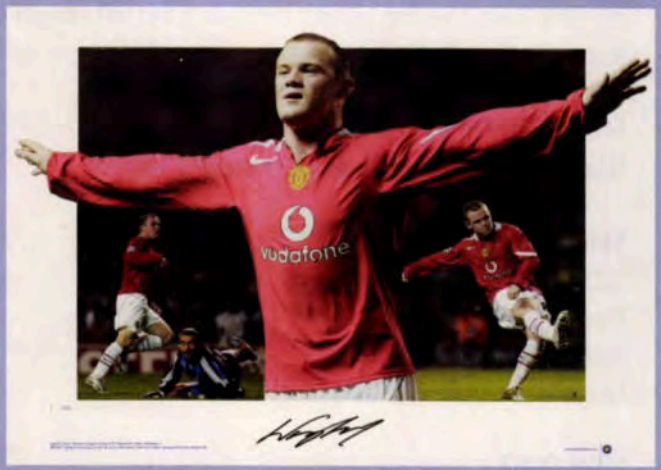

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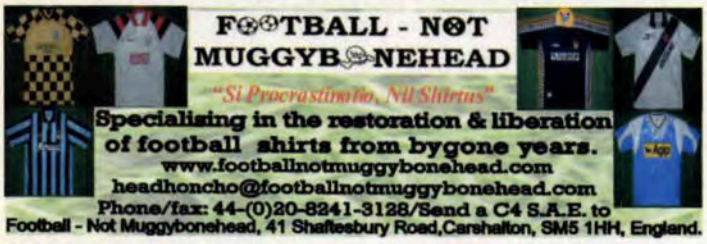

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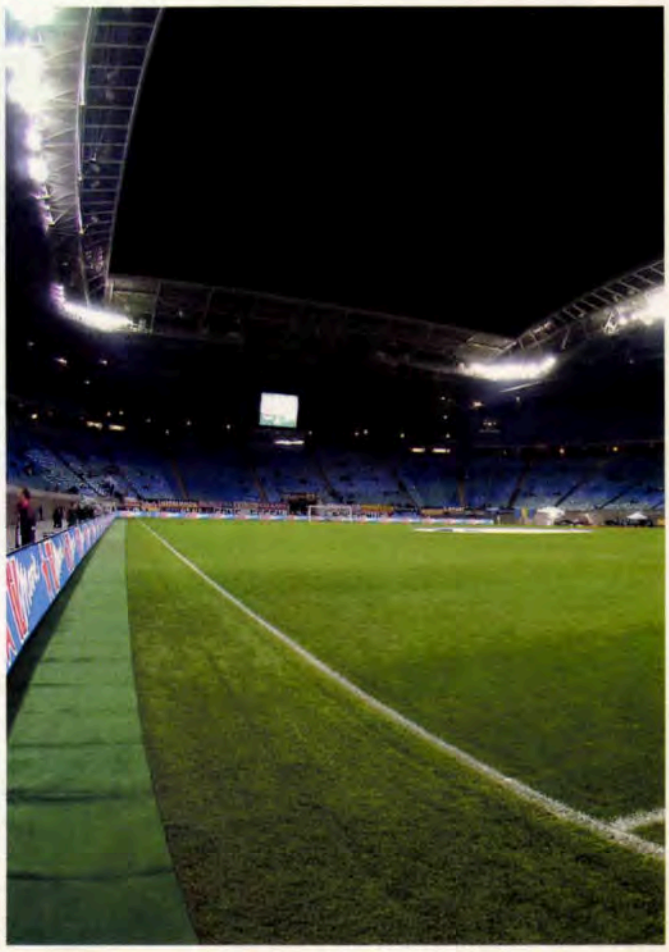
MAY QUIZ
Winner: Masaru Otani, Japan
Answer: Werder Bremen's Weserstadion



WORLD SERVICE

2006 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

● *Match details of June World Cup qualifiers will appear in the next issue*

AFRICA

5 finals berths

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Togo	7	5	1	1	12	4	16
Senegal	7	4	2	1	15	6	14
Zambia	7	4	1	2	9	8	13
Congo	7	2	1	4	6	9	7
Mali	7	1	2	4	8	9	5
Liberia	7	1	1	5	3	17	4

05.06.04 Senegal-Congo 2-0
05.06.04 Zambia-Togo 1-0
06.06.04 Liberia-Mali 1-0
19.06.04 Mali-Zambia 1-1
20.06.04 Congo-Liberia 3-0
20.06.04 Togo-Senegal 3-1
03.07.04 Senegal-Zambia 1-0
04.07.04 Congo-Mali 1-0
04.07.04 Liberia-Togo 0-0
04.09.04 Zambia-Liberia 1-0
05.09.04 Mali-Senegal 2-2
05.09.04 Togo-Congo 2-0
10.10.04 Congo-Zambia 2-3
10.10.04 Liberia-Senegal 0-3
10.10.04 Togo-Mali 1-0
26.03.05 Senegal-Liberia 6-1
26.03.05 Zambia-Congo 2-0
27.03.05 Mali-Togo 1-2
05.06.05 Congo-Senegal 0-0
05.06.05 Mali-Liberia 4-1
05.06.05 Togo-Zambia 4-1
18.06.05 Senegal-Togo
18.06.05 Zambia-Mali
19.06.05 Liberia-Congo
02.09.05 Mali-Congo
02.09.05 Togo-Liberia
02.09.05 Zambia-Senegal
07.10.05 Congo-Togo
07.10.05 Liberia-Zambia
07.10.05 Senegal-Mali

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Africa	7	5	0	2	9	7	15
DR Congo	7	3	3	1	10	5	12
Ghana	7	3	3	1	9	4	12
Cape Verde Is	7	3	1	3	7	8	10
Burkina Faso	7	2	0	5	7	10	6
Uganda	7	1	1	5	3	11	4

05.06.04 Burkina Faso-Ghana 1-0
05.06.04 South Africa-Cape Verde Is 2-1
05.06.04 Uganda-DR Congo 1-0
19.06.04 Cape Verde Is-Uganda 1-0
20.06.04 DR Congo-Burkina Faso 3-2
20.06.04 Ghana-South Africa 3-0
03.07.04 Cape Verde Is-DR Congo 1-1
03.07.04 South Africa-Burkina Faso 2-0
03.07.04 Uganda-Ghana 1-1
04.09.04 Burkina Faso-Uganda 2-0
05.09.04 DR Congo-South Africa 1-0
05.09.04 Ghana-Cape Verde Is 2-0
09.10.04 Cape Verde Is-Burkina Faso 1-0
10.10.04 Ghana-DR Congo 0-0
10.10.04 Uganda-South Africa 0-1
26.03.05 Burkina Faso-Cape Verde Is 1-2
26.03.05 South Africa-Uganda 2-1
27.03.05 DR Congo-Ghana 1-1
04.06.05 Cape Verde Is-South Africa 1-2
05.06.05 DR Congo-Uganda 4-0
05.06.05 Ghana-Burkina Faso 2-1
18.06.05 Burkina Faso-DR Congo
18.06.05 South Africa-Ghana
18.06.05 Uganda-Cape Verde Is
02.09.05 Burkina Faso-South Africa
02.09.05 DR Congo-Cape Verde Is
02.09.05 Ghana-Uganda
07.10.05 Cape Verde Is-Ghana
07.10.05 South Africa-DR Congo
07.10.05 Uganda-Burkina Faso

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	7	5	1	1	13	3	16
Cameroon	7	4	2	1	13	7	14
Egypt	7	4	1	2	21	11	13
Libya	7	3	2	2	8	8	11
Benin	7	0	2	5	7	18	2
Sudan	7	0	2	5	4	19	2

06.06.04 Cameroon-Benin 2-1
06.06.04 Ivory Coast-Libya 2-0
06.06.04 Sudan-Egypt 0-3
18.06.04 Libya-Cameroon 0-0
20.06.04 Benin-Sudan 1-1
20.06.04 Egypt-Ivory Coast 1-2
03.07.04 Sudan-Libya 0-1
04.07.04 Benin-Egypt 3-3
04.07.04 Cameroon-Ivory Coast 2-0
03.09.04 Libya-Benin 4-1
05.09.04 Egypt-Cameroon 3-2
05.09.04 Ivory Coast-Sudan 5-0
08.10.04 Libya-Egypt 2-1
09.10.04 Sudan-Cameroon 1-1
10.10.04 Benin-Ivory Coast 0-1
27.03.05 Cameroon-Sudan 2-1
27.03.05 Egypt-Libya 4-1
27.03.05 Ivory Coast-Benin 3-0
03.06.05 Libya-Ivory Coast 0-0
04.06.05 Benin-Cameroon 1-4
05.06.05 Egypt-Sudan 6-1
19.06.05 Cameroon-Libya
19.06.05 Ivory Coast-Egypt
17.08.05 Sudan-Benin
02.09.05 Egypt-Benin
02.09.05 Ivory Coast-Cameroon
02.09.05 Libya-Sudan
07.10.05 Benin-Libya
07.10.05 Cameroon-Egypt
07.10.05 Sudan-Ivory Coast

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Angola	7	4	2	1	7	5	14
Nigeria	7	4	2	1	10	3	14
Zimbabwe	7	3	2	2	7	6	11
Gabon	7	1	3	3	8	10	6
Algeria	7	1	3	3	4	8	6
Rwanda	7	1	2	4	5	9	5

05.06.04 Algeria-Angola 0-0
05.06.04 Gabon-Zimbabwe 1-1
05.06.04 Nigeria-Rwanda 2-0
19.06.04 Rwanda-Gabon 3-1
20.06.04 Angola-Nigeria 1-0
20.06.04 Zimbabwe-Algeria 1-1
03.07.04 Gabon-Angola 2-2
03.07.04 Nigeria-Algeria 1-0
03.07.04 Rwanda-Zimbabwe 0-2
03.09.04 Zimbabwe-Nigeria 0-3
05.09.04 Algeria-Gabon 0-3
05.09.04 Angola-Rwanda 1-0
09.10.04 Gabon-Nigeria 1-1
09.10.04 Rwanda-Algeria 1-1
10.10.04 Angola-Zimbabwe 1-0
26.03.05 Nigeria-Gabon 2-0
27.03.05 Algeria-Rwanda 1-0
27.03.05 Zimbabwe-Angola 2-0
05.06.05 Angola-Algeria 2-1
05.06.05 Rwanda-Nigeria 1-1
05.06.05 Zimbabwe-Gabon 1-0
18.06.05 Gabon-Rwanda
18.06.05 Nigeria-Angola
19.06.05 Algeria-Zimbabwe
02.09.05 Algeria-Nigeria
02.09.05 Angola-Gabon
02.09.05 Zimbabwe-Rwanda
07.10.05 Gabon-Algeria
07.10.05 Nigeria-Zimbabwe
07.10.05 Rwanda-Angola

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	7	4	3	0	14	5	15
Guinea	7	3	2	2	10	6	11
Tunisia	6	3	2	1	18	7	11
Kenya	6	3	0	3	8	11	9
Botswana	7	2	0	5	6	14	6
Malawi	7	0	3	4	7	20	3

05.06.04 Malawi-Morocco 1-1
05.06.04 Tunisia-Botswana 4-1
19.06.04 Botswana-Malawi 2-0
20.06.04 Guinea-Tunisia 2-1
03.07.04 Botswana-Morocco 0-1
03.07.04 Malawi-Guinea 1-1
04.09.04 Kenya-Malawi 3-2
04.09.04 Morocco-Tunisia 1-1
05.09.04 Guinea-Botswana 4-0
09.10.04 Botswana-Kenya 2-1
09.10.04 Malawi-Tunisia 2-2
10.10.04 Guinea-Morocco 1-1
17.11.04 Kenya-Guinea 2-1
09.02.05 Morocco-Kenya 5-1
26.03.05 Kenya-Botswana 1-0
26.03.05 Morocco-Guinea 1-0
26.03.05 Tunisia-Malawi 7-0
04.06.05 Botswana-Tunisia 1-3
04.06.05 Morocco-Malawi 4-1
05.06.05 Guinea-Kenya 1-0
11.06.05 Tunisia-Guinea
18.06.05 Kenya-Morocco
18.06.05 Malawi-Botswana
17.08.05 Tunisia-Kenya
02.09.05 Kenya-Tunisia
02.09.05 Morocco-Botswana
02.09.05 Guinea-Malawi
07.10.05 Malawi-Kenya
07.10.05 Tunisia-Morocco
07.10.05 Botswana-Guinea

Group winners qualify for finals

ASIA

4.5 finals berths

2nd stage

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saudi Arabia	4	2	2	0	6	1	8
South Korea	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Kuwait	4	1	1	2	2	6	4
Uzbekistan	4	0	2	2	4	6	2

09.02.05 South Korea-Kuwait 2-0
09.02.05 Uzbekistan-Saudi Arabia 1-1
25.03.05 Kuwait-Uzbekistan 2-1
25.03.05 Saudi Arabia-South Korea 2-0
30.03.05 Kuwait-Saudi Arabia 0-0
30.03.05 South Korea-Uzbekistan 2-1
03.06.05 Saudi Arabia-Kuwait 3-0
03.06.05 Uzbekistan-South Korea 1-1
08.06.05 Kuwait-South Korea
08.06.05 Saudi Arabia-Uzbekistan
17.08.05 South Korea-Saudi Arabia
17.08.05 Uzbekistan-Kuwait

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	4	3	1	0	5	1	10
Japan	4	3	0	1	5	3	9
Bahrain	4	1	1	2	2	3	4
North Korea	4	0	0	4	2	7	0

09.02.05 Bahrain-Iran 0-0
09.02.05 Japan-North Korea 2-1
25.03.05 Iran-Japan 2-1
25.03.05 North Korea-Bahrain 1-2
30.03.05 Japan-Bahrain 1-0
30.03.05 North Korea-Iran 0-2
03.06.05 Iran-North Korea 1-0
03.06.05 Bahrain-Japan 0-1
08.06.05 Iran-Bahrain
08.06.05 North Korea-Japan
17.08.05 Bahrain-North Korea
17.08.05 Japan-Iran

Group winners and runners-up qualify for finals. The two third-placed teams meet in a two-leg play-off, the winners of which meet the fourth-placed CONCACAF team over two legs for a place in finals

CONCACAF

3.5 finals berths

3rd stage

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mexico	4	3	1	0	7	3	10
United States	4	3	0	1	8	3	9
Guatemala	4	1	1	2	5	5	4
Costa Rica	4	1	1	2	3	6	4
Trinidad & Tob	4	1	1	2	4	7	4
Panama	4	0	2	2	2	5	2

09.02.05 Costa Rica-Mexico 1-2
09.02.05 Panama-Guatemala 0-0
09.02.05 Trinidad & Tob-United States 1-2
26.03.05 Costa Rica-Panama 2-1
26.03.05 Guatemala-Trinidad & Tob 5-1
27.03.05 Mexico-United States 2-1
30.03.05 Panama-Mexico 1-1
30.03.05 Trinidad & Tob-Costa Rica 0-0
30.03.05 United States-Guatemala 2-0
04.06.05 Guatemala-Mexico 0-2
04.06.05 Trinidad & Tob-Panama 2-0
04.06.05 United States-Costa Rica 3-0
08.06.05 Costa Rica-Guatemala
08.06.05 Mexico-Trinidad & Tob
08.06.05 Panama-United States
17.08.05 Guatemala-Panama
17.08.05 Mexico-Costa Rica
17.08.05 United States-Trinidad & Tob
03.09.05 Panama-Costa Rica
03.09.05 Trinidad & Tob-Guatemala
03.09.05 United States-Mexico
07.09.05 Costa Rica-Trinidad & Tob
07.09.05 Guatemala-United States
07.09.05 Mexico-Panama
08.10.05 Costa Rica-United States
08.10.05 Mexico-Guatemala
08.10.05 Panama-Trinidad & Tob
12.10.05 Guatemala-Costa Rica
12.10.05 Trinidad & Tob-Mexico
12.10.05 United States-Panama

Top three qualify for finals. The fourth-placed team meet the winners of the Asian play-off over two legs for a place in finals

EUROPE

14 finals berths (including hosts Germany, who qualify automatically)

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Holland	7	6	1	0	16	3	19
Czech Republic	7	6	0	1	22	6	18
Romania	8	4	1	3	12	10	13
Finland	6	3	0	3	13	10	9
Macedonia	8	2	2	4	9	10	8
Armenia	8	1	1	6	5	17	4
Andorra	8	1	1	6	4	25	4

18.08.04 Macedonia-Armenia 3-0
18.08.04 Romania-Finland 2-1
04.09.04 Finland-Andorra 3-0
04.09.04 Romania-Macedonia 2-1
08.09.04 Andorra-Romania 1-5
08.09.04 Armenia-Finland 0-2
08.09.04 Holland-Czech Republic 2-0
09.10.04 Czech Republic-Romania 1-0

09.10.04 Finland-Armenia 3-1
09.10.04 Macedonia-Holland 2-2
13.10.04 Andorra-Macedonia 1-0
13.10.04 Armenia-Czech Republic 0-3
13.10.04 Holland-Finland 3-1
17.11.04 Andorra-Holland 0-3
17.11.04 Armenia-Romania 1-1
17.11.04 Macedonia-Czech Republic 0-2
09.02.05 Macedonia-Andorra 0-0
26.03.05 Armenia-Andorra 2-1
26.03.05 Czech Republic-Finland 4-3
26.03.05 Romania-Holland 0-2
30.03.05 Andorra-Czech Republic 0-4
30.03.05 Holland-Armenia 2-0
30.03.05 Macedonia-Romania 1-2
04.06.05 Armenia-Macedonia 1-2
04.06.05 Czech Republic-Andorra 8-1
04.06.05 Holland-Romania 2-0
08.06.05 Czech Republic-Macedonia
08.06.05 Finland-Holland
08.06.05 Romania-Armenia
17.08.05 Macedonia-Finland
17.08.05 Romania-Andorra
03.09.05 Andorra-Finland
03.09.05 Armenia-Holland
03.09.05 Romania-Czech Republic
07.09.05 Czech Republic-Armenia
07.09.05 Finland-Macedonia
07.09.05 Holland-Andorra
08.10.05 Czech Republic-Holland
08.10.05 Finland-Romania
12.10.05 Andorra-Armenia
12.10.05 Finland-Czech Republic
12.10.05 Holland-Macedonia

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ukraine	8	6	2	0	14	3	20
Greece	8	4	3	1	12	6	15
Turkey	8	3	4	1	13	7	13
Denmark	7	2	3	2	10	7	9
Albania	8	3	0	5	6	13	9
Georgia	7	1	2	4	10	16	5
Kazakhstan	6	0	0	6	2	15	0

04.09.04 Albania-Greece 2-1
04.09.04 Denmark-Ukraine 1-1
04.09.04 Turkey-Georgia 1-1
08.09.04 Georgia-Albania 2-0
08.09.04 Greece-Turkey 0-0
08.09.04 Kazakhstan-Ukraine 1-2
09.10.04 Albania-Denmark 0-2
09.10.04 Turkey-Kazakhstan 4-0
09.10.04 Ukraine-Greece 1-1
13.10.04 Denmark-Turkey 1-1
13.10.04 Kazakhstan-Albania 0-1
13.10.04 Ukraine-Georgia 2-0
17.11.04 Georgia-Denmark 2-2
17.11.04 Greece-Kazakhstan 3-1
17.11.04 Turkey-Ukraine 0-3
09.02.05 Albania-Ukraine 0-2
09.02.05 Greece-Denmark 2-1
26.03.05 Denmark-Kazakhstan 3-0
26.03.05 Georgia-Greece 1-3
26.03.05 Turkey-Albania 2-0
30.03.05 Georgia-Turkey 2-5
30.03.05 Greece-Albania 2-0
30.03.05 Ukraine-Denmark 1-0
04.06.05 Albania-Georgia 3-2
04.06.05 Turkey-Greece 0-0
04.06.05 Ukraine-Kazakhstan 2-0
08.06.05 Denmark-Albania
08.06.05 Greece-Ukraine
08.06.05 Kazakhstan-Turkey
17.08.05 Kazakhstan-Georgia
03.09.05 Albania-Kazakhstan
03.09.05 Georgia-Ukraine
03.09.05 Turkey-Denmark
07.09.05 Denmark-Georgia
07.09.05 Kazakhstan-Greece
07.09.05 Ukraine-Turkey
08.10.05 Denmark-Greece
08.10.05 Georgia-Kazakhstan
08.10.05 Ukraine-Albania
12.10.05 Albania-Turkey
12.10.05 Greece-Georgia
12.10.05 Kazakhstan-Denmark

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portugal	7	5	2	0	23	4	17
Slovakia	7	4	2	1	18	7	14
Russia	7	4	2	1	15	10	14
Estonia	8	3	2	3	12	14	11
Latvia	7	3	1	3	14	14	10
Liechtenstein	7	1	1	5	9	18	4
Luxembourg	7	0	0	7	4	28	0

18.08.04 Liechtenstein-Estonia 1-2
18.08.04 Slovakia-Luxembourg 3-1
04.09.04 Estonia-Luxembourg 4-0
04.09.04 Latvia-Portugal 0-2
04.09.04 Russia-Slovakia 1-1
08.09.04 Luxembourg-Latvia 3-4
08.09.04 Portugal-Estonia 4-0
08.09.04 Slovakia-Liechtenstein 7-0
09.10.04 Liechtenstein-Portugal 2-2
09.10.04 Luxembourg-Russia 0-4
09.10.04 Slovakia-Latvia 4-1
13.10.04 Latvia-Estonia 2-2
13.10.04 Luxembourg-Liechtenstein 0-4
13.10.04 Portugal-Russia 7-1
17.11.04 Liechtenstein-Latvia 1-3
17.11.04 Luxembourg-Portugal 0-5
17.11.04 Russia-Estonia 4-0
26.03.05 Estonia-Slovakia 1-2
26.03.05 Liechtenstein-Russia 1-2
30.03.05 Estonia-Russia 1-1
30.03.05 Latvia-Luxembourg 4-0
30.03.05 Slovakia-Portugal 1-1
04.06.05 Estonia-Liechtenstein 2-0
04.06.05 Portugal-Slovakia 2-0
04.06.05 Russia-Latvia 2-0
08.06.05 Estonia-Portugal
08.06.05 Latvia-Liechtenstein
08.06.05 Luxembourg-Slovakia
17.08.05 Latvia-Russia
17.08.05 Liechtenstein-Slovakia
03.09.05 Estonia-Latvia
03.09.05 Portugal-Luxembourg
03.09.05 Russia-Liechtenstein
07.09.05 Latvia-Slovakia
07.09.05 Liechtenstein-Luxembourg
07.09.05 Russia-Portugal
08.10.05 Portugal-Liechtenstein
08.10.05 Russia-Luxembourg
08.10.05 Slovakia-Estonia
12.10.05 Luxembourg-Estonia
12.10.05 Portugal-Latvia
12.10.05 Slovakia-Russia

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Switzerland	6	3	3	0	13	4	12
Israel	7	2	5	0	10	8	11
Rep Ireland	6	2	4	0	9	4	10
France	6	2	4	0	5	1	10
Cyprus	6	0	1	5	4	12	1
Faroe Islands	5	0	1	4	3	15	1

04.09.04 France-Israel 0-0
04.09.04 Rep Ireland-Cyprus 3-0
04.09.04 Switzerland-Faroe Islands 6-0
08.09.04 Faroe Islands-France 0-2
08.09.04 Israel-Cyprus 2-1
08.09.04 Switzerland-Rep Ireland 1-1
09.10.04 Cyprus-Faroe Islands 2-2
09.10.04 France-Rep Ireland 0-0
09.10.04 Israel-Switzerland 2-2
13.10.04 Cyprus-France 0-2
13.10.04 Rep Ireland-Faroe Islands 2-0
17.11.04 Cyprus-Israel 1-2
26.03.05 France-Switzerland 0-0
26.03.05 Israel-Rep Ireland 1-1
30.03.05 Israel-France 1-1
30.03.05 Switzerland-Cyprus 1-0
04.06.05 Faroe Islands-Switzerland 1-3
04.06.05 Rep Ireland-Israel 2-2
08.06.05 Faroe Islands-Rep Ireland
17.08.05 Faroe Islands-Cyprus
03.09.05 France-Faroe Islands
03.09.05 Switzerland-Israel
07.09.05 Cyprus-Switzerland
07.09.05 Faroe Islands-Israel
07.09.05 Rep Ireland-France
08.10.05 Cyprus-Rep Ireland
08.10.05 Switzerland-France
08.10.05 Israel-Faroe Islands
12.10.05 France-Cyprus
12.10.05 Rep Ireland-Switzerland

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy	6	4	1	1	9	5	13
Norway	6	2	3	1	6	3	9
Slovenia	6	2	3	1	6	5	9
Belarus	5	1	3	1	10	7	6
Scotland	5	1	2	2	3	4	5
Moldova	6	0	2	4	1	11	2

04.09.04 Italy-Norway 2-1
04.09.04 Slovenia-Moldova 3-0
08.09.04 Moldova-Italy 0-1
08.09.04 Norway-Belarus 1-1
08.09.04 Scotland-Slovenia 0-0
09.10.04 Belarus-Moldova 4-0
09.10.04 Scotland-Norway 0-1
09.10.04 Slovenia-Italy 1-0
13.10.04 Italy-Belarus 4-3
13.10.04 Moldova-Scotland 1-1
13.10.04 Norway-Slovenia 3-0
26.03.05 Italy-Scotland 2-0
30.03.05 Moldova-Norway 0-0
30.03.05 Slovenia-Belarus 1-1
04.06.05 Belarus-Slovenia 1-1
04.06.05 Norway-Italy 0-0
04.06.05 Scotland-Moldova 2-0
08.06.05 Belarus-Scotland
03.09.05 Moldova-Belarus
03.09.05 Scotland-Italy
03.09.05 Slovenia-Norway
07.09.05 Belarus-Italy
07.09.05 Moldova-Slovenia
07.09.05 Norway-Scotland
08.10.05 Italy-Slovenia
08.10.05 Norway-Moldova
08.10.05 Scotland-Belarus
12.10.05 Belarus-Norway
12.10.05 Italy-Moldova
12.10.05 Slovenia-Scotland

Group 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Poland	7	6	0	1	22	5	18
England	6	5	1	0	13	3	16
Austria	6	3	2	1	11	8	11
N Ireland	6	0	3	3	5	13	3
Wales	6	0	2	4	5	11	2
Azerbaijan	7	0	2	5	1	17	2

04.09.04 Austria-England 2-2
04.09.04 Azerbaijan-Wales 1-1
04.09.04 Northern Ireland-Poland 0-3
08.09.04 Austria-Azerbaijan 2-0
08.09.04 Poland-England 1-2
08.09.04 Wales-Northern Ireland 2-2
09.10.04 Austria-Poland 1-3
09.10.04 Azerbaijan-Northern Ireland 0-0
09.10.04 England-Wales 2-0
13.10.04 Azerbaijan-England 0-1
13.10.04 Northern Ireland-Austria 3-3
13.10.04 Wales-Poland 2-3
26.03.05 England-Northern Ireland 4-0
26.03.05 Poland-Azerbaijan 8-0
26.03.05 Wales-Austria 0-2
30.03.05 Austria-Wales 1-0
30.03.05 England-Azerbaijan 2-0
30.03.05 Poland-Northern Ireland 1-0
04.06.05 Azerbaijan-Poland 0-3
03.09.05 Northern Ireland-Azerbaijan
03.09.05 Poland-Austria
03.09.05 Wales-England
07.09.05 Azerbaijan-Austria
07.09.05 Northern Ireland-England
07.09.05 Poland-Wales
08.10.05 England-Austria
08.10.05 Northern Ireland-Wales
12.10.05 Austria-Northern Ireland
12.10.05 England-Poland
12.10.05 Wales-Azerbaijan

Group 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Serbia & M'gro	6	3	3	0	10	0	12
Spain	6	3	3	0	9	1	12
Lithuania	6	2	3	1	7	3	9
Belgium	6	2	2	2	7	7	8
Bosnia-Herz	5	1	3	1	6	7	6
San Marino	7	0	0	7	2	23	0

04.09.04 Belgium-Lithuania 1-1
04.09.04 San Marino-Serbia & M'negro 0-3
08.09.04 Bosnia-Herz-Spain 1-1
08.09.04 Lithuania-San Marino 4-0
09.10.04 Bosnia-Herz-Serbia & M'negro 0-0
09.10.04 Spain-Belgium 2-0
13.10.04 Lithuania-Spain 0-0
13.10.04 Serbia & M'negro-San Marino 5-0
17.11.04 Belgium-Serbia & M'negro 0-2
17.11.04 San Marino-Lithuania 0-1
09.02.05 Spain-San Marino 5-0
26.03.05 Belgium-Bosnia-Herz 4-1
30.03.05 Bosnia-Herz-Lithuania 1-1
30.03.05 San Marino-Belgium 1-2
30.03.05 Serbia & M'negro-Spain 0-0
04.06.05 San Marino-Bosnia-Herz 1-3
04.06.05 Serbia & M'negro-Belgium 0-0
04.06.05 Spain-Lithuania 1-0
08.06.05 Spain-Bosnia-Herz
03.09.05 Bosnia-Herz-Belgium
03.09.05 Serbia & M'negro-Lithuania
07.09.05 Belgium-San Marino
07.09.05 Lithuania-Bosnia-Herz
07.09.05 Spain-Serbia & M'negro
08.10.05 Belgium-Spain
08.10.05 Bosnia-Herz-San Marino
08.10.05 Lithuania-Serbia & M'negro
12.10.05 Lithuania-Belgium
12.10.05 San Marino-Spain
12.10.05 Serbia & M'negro-Bosnia-Herz

Group 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	6	5	1	0	16	3	16
Sweden	6	5	0	1	23	2	15
Hungary	6	3	1	2	9	11	10
Bulgaria	6	2	2	2	11	11	8
Iceland	6	0	1	5	6	17	1
Malta	6	0	1	5	1	22	1

04.09.04 Croatia-Hungary 3-0
04.09.04 Iceland-Bulgaria 1-3
04.09.04 Malta-Sweden 0-7
08.09.04 Hungary-Iceland 3-2
08.09.04 Sweden-Croatia 0-1
09.10.04 Croatia-Bulgaria 2-2
09.10.04 Malta-Iceland 0-0
09.10.04 Sweden-Hungary 3-0
13.10.04 Bulgaria-Malta 4-1
13.10.04 Iceland-Sweden 1-4
17.11.04 Malta-Hungary 0-2
26.03.05 Bulgaria-Sweden 0-3
26.03.05 Croatia-Iceland 4-0
30.03.05 Croatia-Malta 3-0
30.03.05 Hungary-Bulgaria 1-1
04.06.05 Bulgaria-Croatia 1-3
04.06.05 Iceland-Hungary 2-3
04.06.05 Sweden-Malta 6-0
08.06.05 Iceland-Malta
03.09.05 Hungary-Malta
03.09.05 Iceland-Croatia
03.09.05 Sweden-Bulgaria
07.09.05 Bulgaria-Iceland
07.09.05 Hungary-Sweden
07.09.05 Malta-Croatia
08.10.05 Bulgaria-Hungary
08.10.05 Croatia-Sweden
12.10.05 Hungary-Croatia
12.10.05 Malta-Bulgaria
12.10.05 Sweden-Iceland

Group winners and the two best runners-up qualify for finals. The other six runners-up are paired in three two-leg play-off matches, the winners of which also qualify for finals*
**Group runners-up will be ranked according to their results against the teams finishing 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th in their respective groups*

OCEANIA

0.5 finals berths

3rd stage

03.09.05 Solomon Islands-Australia
06.09.05 Australia-Solomon Islands

Winners meet the fifth-placed South American team over two legs for a place in finals

SOUTH AMERICA

4.5 finals berths

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	14	8	4	2	24	14	28
Brazil	14	7	6	1	25	13	27
Ecuador	14	7	2	5	21	15	23
Paraguay	14	5	4	5	17	21	19
Colombia	14	4	5	5	17	12	17
Uruguay	14	4	5	5	19	26	17
Chile	14	4	5	5	15	15	17
Venezuela	14	4	3	7	15	21	15
Peru	14	3	5	6	15	21	14
Bolivia	14	4	1	9	16	26	13

06.09.03 Argentina-Chile 2-2
06.09.03 Ecuador-Venezuela 2-0
06.09.03 Peru-Paraguay 4-1
07.09.03 Colombia-Brazil 1-2
07.09.03 Uruguay-Bolivia 5-0
09.09.03 Chile-Peru 2-1
09.09.03 Venezuela-Argentina 0-3
10.09.03 Bolivia-Colombia 4-0
10.09.03 Brazil-Ecuador 1-0
10.09.03 Paraguay-Uruguay 4-1
15.11.03 Argentina-Bolivia 3-0
15.11.03 Colombia-Venezuela 0-1

15.11.03	Paraguay-Ecuador	2-1
15.11.03	Uruguay-Chile	2-1
16.11.03	Peru-Brazil	1-1
18.11.03	Chile-Paraguay	0-1
18.11.03	Venezuela-Bolivia	2-1
19.11.03	Brazil-Uruguay	3-3
19.11.03	Colombia-Argentina	1-1
19.11.03	Ecuador-Peru	0-0
30.03.04	Argentina-Ecuador	1-0
30.03.04	Bolivia-Chile	0-2
31.03.04	Paraguay-Brazil	0-0
31.03.04	Peru-Colombia	0-2
31.03.04	Uruguay-Venezuela	0-3
01.06.04	Bolivia-Paraguay	2-1
01.06.04	Uruguay-Peru	1-3
01.06.04	Venezuela-Chile	0-1
02.06.04	Brazil-Argentina	3-1
02.06.04	Ecuador-Colombia	2-1
05.06.04	Ecuador-Bolivia	3-2
06.06.04	Argentina-Paraguay	0-0
06.06.04	Chile-Brazil	1-1
06.06.04	Colombia-Uruguay	5-0
06.06.04	Peru-Venezuela	0-0
04.09.04	Peru-Argentina	1-3
05.09.04	Brazil-Bolivia	3-1
05.09.04	Chile-Colombia	0-0
05.09.04	Paraguay-Venezuela	1-0
05.09.04	Uruguay-Ecuador	1-0
09.10.04	Argentina-Uruguay	4-2
09.10.04	Bolivia-Peru	1-0
09.10.04	Colombia-Paraguay	1-1
09.10.04	Venezuela-Brazil	2-5
10.10.04	Ecuador-Chile	2-0
12.10.04	Bolivia-Uruguay	0-0
13.10.04	Brazil-Colombia	0-0
13.10.04	Chile-Argentina	0-0
13.10.04	Paraguay-Peru	1-1
14.10.04	Venezuela-Ecuador	3-1
17.11.04	Argentina-Venezuela	3-2
17.11.04	Colombia-Bolivia	1-0
17.11.04	Ecuador-Brazil	1-0
17.11.04	Peru-Chile	2-1
17.11.04	Uruguay-Paraguay	1-0
26.03.05	Bolivia-Argentina	1-2
26.03.05	Chile-Uruguay	1-1
26.03.05	Venezuela-Colombia	0-0
27.03.05	Brazil-Peru	1-0
27.03.05	Ecuador-Paraguay	5-2
29.03.05	Bolivia-Venezuela	3-1
30.03.05	Argentina-Colombia	1-0
30.03.05	Paraguay-Chile	2-1
30.03.05	Peru-Ecuador	2-2
30.03.05	Uruguay-Brazil	1-1
04.06.05	Chile-Bolivia	3-1
04.06.05	Colombia-Peru	5-0
04.06.05	Ecuador-Argentina	2-0
04.06.05	Venezuela-Uruguay	1-1
05.06.05	Brazil-Paraguay	4-1
07.06.05	Peru-Uruguay	
08.06.05	Argentina-Brazil	
08.06.05	Chile-Venezuela	
08.06.05	Colombia-Ecuador	
08.06.05	Paraguay-Bolivia	
03/04.09.05	Bolivia-Ecuador	
03/04.09.05	Brazil-Chile	
03/04.09.05	Paraguay-Argentina	
03/04.09.05	Uruguay-Colombia	
03/04.09.05	Venezuela-Peru	
08/09.10.05	Argentina-Peru	
08/09.10.05	Bolivia-Brazil	
08/09.10.05	Colombia-Chile	
08/09.10.05	Ecuador-Uruguay	
08/09.10.05	Venezuela-Paraguay	
11/12.10.05	Brazil-Venezuela	
11/12.10.05	Chile-Ecuador	
11/12.10.05	Paraguay-Colombia	
11/12.10.05	Peru-Bolivia	
11/12.10.05	Uruguay-Argentina	

Top four qualify for finals; fifth-placed team meet the Oceania section winners over two legs for a place in finals

INTERNATIONALS

Monday, May 23

May 23 - friendly
Sudan 4
Chad 1

Tuesday, May 24

May 24 - Oslo - friendly
Norway 1 (F Johnsen 78)
Costa Rica 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 21,251. **Ref:** Van Egmond (Hol)
Norway: E Johnsen - Hoiland (M Johnsen 46), Hangeland, Borgersen, Bergdolmo, Svindal Larsen (Kvisvik 54), Andresen (Haestad 46), Solli, Iversen (F Johnsen 46), Gamst Pedersen, Saeternes (Arst 46).
Costa Rica: Mesen - V Cordero, Wright, Umana, Bolanos (J Drummond 60), Badilla (Gomez 60), Lopez, L Gonzalez, Rojas, Wanchope, Soto (A Solis 73).

May 24 - Bacau - friendly
Romania 2 (Niculescu 8, Dica 55)
Moldova 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Salomir (Rom)
Romania: Lobont (D Coman 46) - Contra, Tamas, Ghionea (Pascovici 46), G Coman (Maftei 46), Dumitru (D Niculae 65), O Petre, Plesan, D Munteanu (Cocis 46), Grigorie (Dica 46), Niculescu (Mazilu 52).
Moldova: Romanenco - Catinsus, Lascencov, Valuta, Golovatenco, Barisev (Boicenco 41), Burcovschi (Stadiiciuc 77), Tanurcov (Pogreban 66), Josan (Cucovei 57), Calincov (Grossu 67), Frunza (Boghiu 82).

Wednesday, May 25

May 25 - Port-of-Spain - friendly
Trinidad & Tobago 4 (Dill og 34, Jones 46, Lawrence 51, S John 65)
Bermuda 0
HT: 1-0

May 25 - Caracas - friendly
Venezuela 1 (Maldonado 4)
Panama 1 (Brown 34)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Brand (Ven)
Venezuela: Dudamel (Angelucci 46) - Vielma, Fuenmayor, De Ornelas, Rivero, L Vera (M Mea Vitali 77), H Gonzalez (Fernandez 74), A Gonzalez, Paez (Ramirez 58), Maldonado (Caceres 46), Moran.
Panama: McFarlane - Henriquez (Parrish 72), Cox, Solanilla, Jimenez (Garces 90), Gomez, Blanco, Medina (Justavino 90), Phillips (Avila 76), Brown, Rodriguez (Diaz 61).

Thursday, May 26

May 26 - friendly
Sudan 1
Chad 1

Friday, May 27

May 27 - Kuwait City - friendly
Kuwait 0
Egypt 1 (A Hassan 52)
HT: 0-0
Sent off: Al-Mutawa (Kuwait)

May 27 - Tripoli - friendly
Libya 1
Malawi 1

May 27 - Riyadh - friendly
Saudi Arabia 1 (Kariri 35)
Bahrain 1 (Adnan pen 18)
HT: 1-1

May 27 - Marabella - friendly
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (S John 17)
Bermuda 0
HT: 1-0

May 27 - Tunis - friendly
Tunisia 4 (Zitouni 20, 70, Mhadhebi 51, 89)
Angola 1 (Flavio pen 78)
HT: 1-0
Tunisia: Kasraoui - Haj Messaoud, Clayton (Bekri 57), Jaidi, Badra (Abdi 46), Nafti, Chedli, Benachour (Sghaier 64), Jomaa, Guemamdia (Mhadhebi 46), Zitouni (Braham 71).

Saturday, May 28

May 28 - Chicago - friendly
United States 1 (Dempsey 79)
England 2 (Richardson 4, 44)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 47,637. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
USA: Keller - Cherundolo, Pope (Bocanegra 73), Gibbs, Vanney, Ralston (Convey 73), Zavagnin, Dempsey (Simms 90), Donovan, Wolff, McBride (Casey 81).
England: James - G Johnson, Brown, Campbell (Knight 46), A Cole (Defoe 63), Jenas, Carrick, J Cole, Richardson (P Neville 59), Smith, A Johnson (Young 76).

Sunday, May 29

May 29 - friendly
Hong Kong 8
Macao 1

May 29 - Tehran - friendly
Iran 2 (Zandi 9, Nekounam 29)
Azerbaijan 1 (G Gurbanov 67)
HT: 2-0

May 29 - Szczecin - friendly
Poland 1 (Zurawski 1)
Albania 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Weiner (Ger)
Poland: Boruc - Baszczynski (Kaczorowski 87), Klos, Bosacki, Kielbowicz (Stolarczyk 46), Kosowski (Karwan 46), Radomski (Zienczuk 75), Sobolewski, Krzynowek, Zurawski (Slusarski 63), Frankowski (Niedzielan 46).
Albania: Hidi - Dallku, Osmani, Cipi, Aliaj (Haxhi 73), Hasi (Lici 85), Lala, Skela (Shkembi 65), K Duro (Sina 78), Dragusha (Murati 46), Myrtaj (Kapllani 46).

May 29 - friendly
Togo 1
Burkina Faso 0
HT: 1-0

Tuesday, May 31

May 31 - East Rutherford, USA - friendly
Colombia 2 (Yepes 45, A Ramirez 78)
England 3 (Owen 36, 42, 58)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 50,807. **Ref:** Hall (USA)
Colombia: Mondragon - Palacio (A Ramirez 72), L Perea, Yepes (Mendoza 81), Benitez, Hurtado (Vargas 46), Viafara (Anchico 60), J Restrepo (Diaz 72), Soto, Angel (E Perea 60), Rey.
England: James (Green 46) - P Neville, Brown, Knight, A Cole, Beckham (Richardson 72), Jenas, Carrick, J Cole (Young 85), Crouch (Smith 72), Owen (Defoe 72).

May 31 - Metz - friendly
France 2 (Cisse 10, Malouda 35)
Hungary 1 (Kerekes 78)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 26,120. **Ref:** Allaerts (Blg)
France: Coupet - Reveillere, Gallas (Squillaci 82), Boumsong, Abidal, Dhorasoo (Mavuba 65), Pedretti, Rothen, Wiltord (Govou 59), Cisse (Giuly 75), Malouda.
Hungary: Kiraly (Fulop 46) - Bodnar, Stark, Balog, Vanczak, G Vincze (Takacs 46), Hajnal, Gera (Baranyos 46), O Vincze (N Toth 46), Huszti, Szabics (Kerekes 46).

Wednesday, June 1

June 1 - friendly
Lesotho 3
Swaziland 4
HT: 3-1

June 1 - South Africa - friendly
Zambia 1
Gabon 0
HT: 0-0

Thursday, June 2

June 2 - Tampere - friendly
Finland 0
Denmark 1 (Silberbauer 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,238. **Ref:** Wegereef (Hol)
Finland: Jaaskelainen - Saarinen (Kallio 67), Hyypia, Tihinen (Kuivasto 58), Nurmela, Litmanen (Wiss 58), Riihilahti, Kopteff (Kolkka 46), S Kuqi (Forssell 79), Eremenko, Johansson (Vayrynen 76).
Denmark: Sorensen (Christiansen 46) - Priske, Kroldrup, Agger, N Jensen (A Jepsen 71), Poulsen (D Jensen 46), Gravesen, Rommedahl (Silberbauer 79), Jorgensen, Perez (Larsen 46), Tomasson (Wurtz 85).

BALTIC CUP

May 21 - Kaunas
Lithuania 2 (Morinas 25, 81)
Latvia 0
HT: 1-0
Lithuania: V Zutautas - Regelskis (Graziunas 84), Klimavicius, Paulauskas, Zelmikas, Barasa (Papeckys 71), Kucys, Maciulevicius (Poderis 46), Morinas (Beniusis 87), Laurisas (Radzinevicius 78), Velicka (Astrauskas 46).
Latvia: Piedels (Romanovs 46) - Zemlinskis, Lobanovs (Zavoronkovs 46), Isakovs, Zirnis, Zakresevskis, Visnakovs (Miholaps 81), Solonicins, Morozs (Kalnins 28), Stolcers (Mihalcuks 57), Slesarcuks (Blanks 59). *Sent off: Zirnis 54min.*

KIRIN CUP

In Japan

May 22 - Niigata
Japan 0
Peru 1 (Vassallo 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 42,000. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Japan: Kawaguchi - Tanaka, Miyamoto, Tsuboi, Fukunishi (Inamoto 72), Endo, Miura, Ogasawara, Alex, T Suzuki (Motoyama 78), Tamada (Oguro 57).
Peru: Flores - Tenemas (Cevasco 65), Villalta, Guadalupe, Portilla, La Rosa (Ismodes 90), Bazalar, Mendoza, Lobaton (Chiroque 62), Alva (Salas 78), Mostto (Vasallo 84).

May 24 - Nagoya
Peru 0
United Arab Emirates 0
Ref: Nishimura (Jap)
Peru: Flores - Mendoza, Guadalupe, Villalta, Portilla, Bazalar, La Rosa, Lobaton (Cevasco 46), Chiroque (Ismodes 46), Alva (Salas 72), Vassallo (Mostto 79).

May 27 - Tokyo
Japan 0
United Arab Emirates 1 (H Ali 69)
HT: 0-0
Japan: Kawaguchi - Tanaka (Chano 77), Miyamoto, Alex, Tsuboi (Motoyama 72), Kaji, Fukunishi (Inamoto 82), Ogasawara, Ono, T Suzuki (Tamada 65), Oguro.

KIRIN CUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Peru	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
UAE	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Japan	2	0	0	2	0	2	0

CONFEDERATIONS CUP

In Germany

Match schedule

Group A
June 15: Argentina v Tunisia (Cologne)
June 15: Germany v Australia (Frankfurt)
June 18: Tunisia v Germany (Cologne)
June 18: Australia v Argentina (Nurnberg)
June 21: Australia v Tunisia (Leipzig)
June 21: Argentina v Germany (Nurnberg)

Group B
June 16: Japan v Mexico (Hanover)
June 16: Brazil v Greece (Leipzig)
June 19: Mexico v Brazil (Hanover)
June 19: Greece v Japan (Frankfurt)
June 22: Greece v Mexico (Frankfurt)
June 22: Japan v Brazil (Cologne)

Semi-finals
June 25: Gp A 1st v Gp B 2nd (Nurnberg)
June 26: Gp B 1st v Gp A 2nd (Hanover)

Third-place play-off
June 29: (Leipzig)

Final
June 29: (Frankfurt)

EUROPE

ALBANIA

ALBANIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SK Tirana	36	26	6	4	82	32	84
Elbasani	36	24	7	5	59	27	79
Dinamo	36	18	8	10	51	30	62
Vllaznia	36	19	4	13	80	47	61
Teuta	36	16	4	16	47	49	52
Shkumbini	36	14	6	16	49	47	48
Lushnja	36	13	9	14	43	47	48
Partizani	36	13	7	16	59	58	46
Egnatia	36	7	7	22	26	48	28
Laci	36	0	2	34	13	124	2

Relegated: Egnatia, Laci
Promoted: Besa Kavaje, Skenderbeu Korce

ALBANIAN CUP – Final

May 11 - Ruzhdi Bizhuta stadium, Elbasan
Teuta 0
SK Tirana 0
Aet. **Ref:** Janku
Teuta 6-5 on pens

ANDORRA

ANDORRA – CHAMPIONSHIP POOL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sant Julia	20	18	0	2	61	14	54
Ranger's	20	17	0	3	59	15	51
Santa Coloma	20	12	1	7	50	26	37
Principat	20	6	2	12	23	45	20

RELEGATION POOL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter d'Escaldes	20	7	4	9	36	44	25
Lusitans	20	5	2	13	24	48	17
Atletic d'Es'des	20	5	0	15	19	58	15
Encamp	20	4	3	13	19	41	15

Relegated: Encamp
Promoted: Extremenya

Division split into championship and relegation pools after 14 rounds. Final six games played against teams in own pool

ANDORRAN CUP – Final

May 22 - Aixovall
Sant Julia 1 (Roig 90)
Santa Coloma 2 (Ayala 14, Imbernon 71)
HT: 0-1

ARMENIA

ARMENIAN CUP – Final

May 9 - Hanrapetakan stadium, Yerevan
Mika Ashtarak 2 (Artyom Adamyan 50, Magdiyev 75)
Kilikia Yerevan 0
HT: 0-0

AUSTRIA

May 5: Austria Wien 0 Grazer AK 3.
May 7: Rapid Wien 6 Admira 0; Bregenz 0 Wacker Tirol 3; Mattersburg 1 Pasching 1; Salzburg 1 Sturm Graz 0.
May 8: Grazer AK 0 Austria Wien 0.
May 11: Austria Wien 4 Pasching 0; Admira 0 Rapid Wien 1.
May 14: Rapid Wien 4 Bregenz 1; Admira 0 Mattersburg 1; Sturm Graz 1 Grazer AK 1; Wacker Tirol 0 Salzburg 0.
May 15: Pasching 1 Austria Wien 1.
May 21: Grazer AK 2 Wacker Tirol 1; Austria Wien 2 Sturm Graz 2; Mattersburg 2 Bregenz 2; Pasching 1 Admira 1.
May 22: Salzburg 4 Rapid Wien 1.
May 26: Rapid Wien 0 Austria Wien 1; Bregenz 0 Grazer AK 1; Admira 1 Salzburg 1; Sturm Graz 3 Pasching 0; Wacker Tirol 2 Mattersburg 1.
May 29: Grazer AK 3 Rapid Wien 1; Austria Wien 5 Admira 1; Mattersburg 1 Sturm Graz 3; Salzburg 2 Bregenz 1; Pasching 1 Wacker Tirol 1.

AUSTRIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid Wien	36	21	8	7	67	31	71
Grazer AK	36	21	7	8	58	28	70
Austria Wien	36	19	12	5	64	24	69
Pasching	36	17	9	10	53	48	60
Mattersburg	36	12	9	15	48	58	45
Wacker Tirol	36	11	11	14	48	48	44
Sturm Graz	36	10	10	16	37	47	40
Admira	36	10	8	18	36	63	38
Salzburg	36	9	9	18	37	51	36
Bregenz	36	4	9	23	30	80	21

Relegated: Bregenz
Promoted: SV Ried

AUSTRIAN CUP – Final

June 1 - Ernst-Happel stadium, Vienna
Rapid Wien 1 (Burgstaller 5)
Austria Wien 3 (Mila 20, Vastic 55, Sionko 65)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Sowa

AZERBAIJAN

AZERI CUP – Final

May 28 - Tofik Bakhramov stadium, Baku
Inter Baku 1 (Makouski 52)
FK Baku 2 (Leandro 5, Ladaga 114)
Aet. **HT:** 0-1. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 10,000.
Ref: Yusifov
Sent off: Idakhor (Inter) 112min; Ladaga (FK Baku) 119min

BELARUS

BELORUSSIAN CUP – Final

May 22 - Dinamo stadium, Minsk
MTZ-Ripo 2 (Federov 42, Kontsevoy 73)
BATE Borisov 1 (Levedev 28)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Kulbakou

BELGIUM

Friday, May 6
Mons 0
Club Brugge 0 Att: 9,000

Saturday, May 7
Anderlecht 3 (Jestrovic 24, pen 53, Wilhelmsson 62)
Germinal Beerschot 0 Att: 23,309

Beveren 2 (Sanogo 44, Arunina 63)
Standard 3 (Sergio Conceicao 14, Rapajic 27, 49) Att: 3,000

Cercle Brugge 1 (Boi 68)
Mouscron 0 Att: 4,500

Charleroi 1 (Brogno pen 31)
FC Brussels 2 (Culek 49, Sels 88) Att: 11,000

Gent 2 (Boussoufa 35, De Beule 79)
La Louviere 1 (Van Handenhoven 3) Att: 7,000

Lierse 1 (Nnaji 62)
Genk 5 (Stojanovic 21, 43, Dijck og 56, Vandenbergh 69, Daerden 81) Att: 7,500

Sunday, May 8
Ostende 0
Lokeren 2 (Hendrikx 29, Vidarsson 72) Att: 2,560

St Truiden 1 (De Ceulaer 86)
Westerlo 0 Att: 5,000

Sunday, May 15
FC Brussels 2 (Culek 25, De Camargo 47)
Cercle Brugge 1 (Van Mol 58) Att: 4,500

Club Brugge 2 (Ceh 1, 38)
Anderlecht 2 (Tihinen 36, Jestrovic 51) Att: 27,734

Genk 2 (Stojanovic 64, Soetaers 87)
Charleroi 0 Att: 24,125

Germinal Beerschot 3 (Van Dooren 21, De Wree 26, Vos 57)
St Truiden 1 (Rutten 55) Att: 6,723

La Louviere 2 (Eloi 30, 51)
Ostende 0 Att: 4,000

Lokeren 0
Lierse 2 (Raeymaeckers 42, Thompson 72) Att: 5,000

Mons 0
Mouscron 2 (Zewlakow 81, 83) Att: 4,500

Standard 3 (Smoje og 58, Roussel 66, Sergio Conceicao pen 89)
Gent 0 Att: 20,000

Westerlo 1 (Elejiko 48)
Beveren 1 (Sanogo 52) Att: 4,500

Saturday, May 21
Anderlecht 2 (Dindane 19, Jestrovic pen 87)
Mons 1 (Milas 59) Att: 23,767

Cercle Brugge 1 (Boi 64)
Genk 3 (Vandenbergh 86, Daerden 88, Haroun 90) Att: 5,000

Charleroi 2 (Theophile 26, Macquet 45)
Lokeren 1 (Coppens 52) Att: 11,509

Gent 1 (Jbari 13)
Westerlo 0 Att: 7,000

Germinal Beerschot 3 (Cavens 31, 45, Snoeckx 62)
Beveren 1 (Romaric 77) Att: 6,500

Lierse 7 (Mitu 3, Fassotte 5, Thompson 19, 51, Imschoot 35, Delorge 55, Milenkovic 70)
La Louviere 0 Att: 6,000

Mouscron 2 (Dimbala 40, De Vleeschauwer 45)
FC Brussels 0 Att: 6,352

Ostende 1 (Santalab 42)
Standard 1 (Roussel 12) Att: 5,000

St Truiden 3 (Hajnal 28, 39, Ipoua 84)
Club Brugge 2 (Rozehnal 19, Van Tornhout 86) Att: 11,000

BELGIUM – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge	34	24	7	3	83	25	79
Anderlecht	34	23	7	4	75	34	76
Standard	34	21	7	6	64	30	70
Genk	34	21	7	6	59	37	70
Charleroi	34	19	7	8	47	34	64
Gent	34	18	5	11	46	36	59
La Louviere	34	12	8	14	43	43	44
Lokeren	34	11	11	12	36	38	44
Germinal B	34	12	6	16	36	45	42
Lierse	34	12	5	17	57	60	41
Cercle Brugge	34	12	5	17	45	74	41
Westerlo	34	11	6	17	34	54	39
Mouscron	34	10	6	18	40	43	36
St Truiden	34	10	6	18	40	58	36
FC Brussels	34	10	3	21	32	60	33
Beveren	34	8	8	18	43	59	32
Ostende	34	6	9	19	31	62	27
Mons	34	7	5	22	39	58	26

Relegated: Ostende, Mons
Promoted: Zulte-Waregem, Roeselare

TOP GOALSCORERS
18 Nenad Jestrovic (Anderlecht)
17 Kevin Vandenbergh (Genk)
15 Sambegou Bangoura (Standard)
15 Rune Lange (Club Brugge)

BELGIAN CUP – semi-finals, 2nd legs

May 10: Lierse 0 Club Brugge 1
Club Brugge 2-0 on agg.
May 11: Germinal Beerschot 0 Lokeren 0
Agg 1-1. Germinal on away goals.

Final

May 28 - King Baudouin stadium, Brussels
Club Brugge 1 (Verheyen 53)
Germinal Beerschot 2 (Snoeckx 23, De Wree 54)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** De Bleeckere

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zrinjski	30	19	4	7	56	30	61
Zeljeznicar	30	15	6	9	31	22	51
Siroki Brijeg	30	12	9	9	42	33	45
Sarajevo	30	13	6	11	39	37	45
Travnik	30	14	2	14	42	47	44
Modrica	30	11	9	10	38	32	42
Orasje	30	13	3	14	45	43	42
Buducnost	30	13	3	14	37	40	42
Posusje	30	13	3	14	34	43	42
Slavija	30	12	5	13	36	34	41
Sloboda (Tuzla)	30	11	8	11	30	28	41
Zepce	30	13	2	15	33	36	41
Celik	30	13	2	15	29	37	41
Leotar	30	13	2	15	35	45	41
Borac*	30	13	2	15	36	39	40
Rudar	30	7	4	19	26	43	25

**1pt deducted for not turning up for round 11 match*

Relegated: Borac, Rudar
Promoted: Velez, Radnik

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA CUP – Final, 1st leg

May 11 - Pecara stadium, Siroki Brijeg
Siroki Brijeg 0
Sarajevo 1 (Obuca 10)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Kaplan

Final, 2nd leg

May 17 - Kosevo stadium, Sarajevo
Sarajevo 1 (Obuca 42)
Siroki Brijeg 1 (Juricic 66)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 13,000. **Ref:** Zovkic
Sent off: Avdic, Hadzic, Osmanhodzic (all Sarajevo); Ivic, Dujmovic (both Siroki Brijeg)
Sarajevo 2-1 on agg

BULGARIA

May 6: Lokomotiv Sofia 2 Beroe 1; Cherno More 1 Spartak Varna 0.
May 7: Slavia 0 Pirin 0; Belasitsa 2 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1; Marek 2 Rodopa 1; Vidima-Rakovski 2 Nesebar 1; Levski 4 Naftex 1; Lovech 0 CSKA 1.
May 11: Lokomotiv Sofia 1 Slavia 0; Beroe 2 Cherno More 0; Spartak Varna 0 Levski 7; Nesebar 0 Lovech 3; CSKA 5 Marek 0; Rodopa 3 Belasitsa 1; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 4 Pirin 4; Naftex 2 Vidima-Rakovski 0.
May 15: Slavia 2 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0; Pirin 4 Rodopa 2; Belasitsa 1 CSKA 4; Marek 4 Nesebar 1; Lovech 0 Naftex 1; Vidima-Rakovski 2 Spartak Varna 1; Levski 3 Beroe 1; Cherno More 0 Lokomotiv Sofia 1.
May 21: Cherno More 1 Slavia 1; Lokomotiv Sofia 0 Levski 0; Beroe 2 Vidima-Rakovski 1; Spartak Varna 0 Lovech 2; Naftex 2 Marek 1; Nesebar 1 Belasitsa 3; CSKA 2 Pirin 1; Rodopa 4 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2.
May 28: Slavia 1 Rodopa 3; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 4 CSKA 3; Pirin 3 Nesebar 1; Belasitsa 2 Naftex 0; Marek 4 Spartak Varna 1; Lovech 1 Beroe 1; Vidima-Rakovski 2 Lokomotiv Sofia 0; Levski 2 Cherno More 1.

BULGARIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA	30	25	4	1	81	16	79
Levski	30	24	4	2	76	19	76
Lok Plovdiv	30	18	4	8	65	34	58
Lovech	30	16	4	10	45	27	52
Slavia	30	13	9	8	43	33	48
Lok Sofia*	30	14	7	9	43	35	46
Naftex	30	10	5	15	24	38	35
Cherno More	30	10	5	15	30	38	35
Marek	30	9	8	13	34	44	35
Beroe	30	9	8	13	32	36	35
Belasitsa	30	9	7	14	25	48	34
Rodopa	30	9	6	15	33	43	33
Pirin	30	7	12	11	31	40	33
Vidima-R'vski	30	9	5	16	32	51	32
Nesebar	30	5	5	20	26	63	20
Spartak Varna	30	5	3	22	18	73	18

**3pts deducted for non-payment of wages*

Relegated: Vidima-Rakovski, Nesebar, Spartak Varna
Promoted: Vihren, Botev, Pirin 1922

BULGARIAN CUP – Final

May 25 - Vasil Levski stadium, Sofia
CSKA 1 (Yanev pen 82)
Levski 2 (Borimirov 52, Domovchiiski 75)
HT: 0-0
Sent off: Yanchev 51min, Todorov 90min (both CSKA); Topuzakov (Levski) 80min

CROATIA

Championship play-offs

May 7: Zagreb 3 Hajduk 2; Varteks 3 Rijeka 1; Inter 2 Slaven 1.
May 14: Inter 1 Zagreb 1; Slaven 2 Varteks 2; Rijeka 1 Hajduk 1.
May 18: Zagreb 2 Rijeka 1; Hajduk 0 Slaven 0; Varteks 1 Inter 2.
May 21: Varteks 3 Zagreb 1; Inter 1 Hajduk 1; Slaven 1 Rijeka 1.
May 28: Zagreb 7 Slaven 1; Rijeka 3 Inter 3; Hajduk 6 Varteks 0.

CROATIA – CHAMPIONSHIP POOL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hajduk	32	16	8	8	58	33	56
Inter	32	15	9	8	44	39	54
Zagreb	32	15	5	12	50	42	50
Rijeka	32	11	14	7	52	40	47
Varteks	32	14	3	15	53	50	45
Slaven	32	12	9	11	37	41	45

RELEGATION POOL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	32	12	11	9	55	37	47
Kamen Ingrad	32	12	5	15	36	39	41
Osijek	32	9	14	9	41	45	41
Pula	32	7	14	11	28	31	35
Medimurje	32	9	6	17	29	52	33
Zadar	32	10	2	20	36	70	32

Relegated: Zadar (Medimurje go into relegation/ promotion play-off)

Division split into championship and relegation pools after 22 rounds. All points and goals carried forward. Final 10 games played against teams in own pool

CROATIAN CUP – Final, 1st leg

May 11 - Kantrida stadium, Rijeka
Rijeka 2 (Mitu 58, Erceg 61)
Hajduk 1 (Djolonga 22)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 7,000

Final, 2nd leg

May 25 - Poljud stadium, Split
Hajduk 0
Rijeka 1 (Mitu 80)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Strahonja
Rijeka 3-1 on agg

CYPRUS

CYPRUS – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anorthosis*	25	19	5	1	64	23	62
APOEL	26	17	7	2	56	21	58
Omonia	26	13	8	5	47	29	47
Olympiakos	26	11	6	9	36	38	39
Digenis	26	10	6	10	36	31	36
Nea Salamina	26	11	3	12	36	40	36
Apollon*	25	10	5	10	43	35	35
ENP	26	7	11	8	38	39	32
AEK	26	7	11	8	26	34	32
AEL	26	8	7	11	36	38	31
Ethnikos Ach	26	8	6	12	31	40	30
AEP	26	8	5	13	38	52	29
Alki	26	8	5	13	39	55	29
Aris	26	1	1	24	22	73	4

**Anorthosis v Apollon game declared void since both clubs were deemed guilty of the crowd trouble that caused it to be abandoned*

Relegated: AEP, Alki, Aris
Promoted: APOP, APEP, ENTHOI

CYPRIOT CUP – Final

May 22 - GSP stadium, Nicosia
Omonia 2 (Mguni 45, Papaioannou 74)
Digenis 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 21,377. **Ref:** Papoutsos

CZECH REPUBLIC

May 7: Opava 1 Chmel Blsany 2; Mlada Boleslav 2 Sparta 1; Slovacko 1 Liberec 1.
May 8: Teplice 1 Pribram 0; Jablonec 0 Olomouc 1; Drnovice 2 Zlin 0.
May 9: Slavia 0 Ceske Budejovice 2; Brno 2 Ostrava 0.
May 14: Zlin 1 Jablonec 2; Liberec 3 Opava 0; Pribram 0 Slavia 1.
May 15: Sparta 2 Brno 0; Chmel Blsany 1 Ceske Budejovice 0; Mlada Boleslav 0 Drnovice 0.
May 16: Ostrava 2 Slovacko 2; Olomouc 3 Teplice 3.
May 20: Drnovice 1 Ostrava 0.
May 21: Slavia 0 Chmel Blsany 0; Ceske Budejovice 0 Zlin 0; Teplice 0 Liberec 1; Opava 1 Olomouc 2; Slovacko 1 Pribram 1.
May 22: Jablonec 3 Sparta 0; Brno 2 Mlada Boleslav 0.
May 25: Slavia 1 Zlin 0; Ceske Budejovice 1 Olomouc 2; Teplice 2 Ostrava 0; Jablonec 2 Mlada Boleslav 0; Opava 0 Pribram 2; Chmel Blsany 1 Liberec 1; Drnovice 1 Brno 3; Slovacko 2 Sparta 0.
May 28: Ostrava 0 Slavia 2; Sparta 1 Teplice 2; Olomouc 4 Drnovice 1; Zlin 3 Opava 0; Liberec 3 Ceske Budejovice 2; Pribram 2 Chmel Blsany 1; Brno 1 Jablonec 2; Mlada Boleslav 0 Slovacko 0.

CZECH REPUBLIC – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta	30	20	4	6	53	28	64
Slavia	30	15	8	7	39	25	53
Teplice	30	14	11	5	36	27	53
Olomouc	30	15	6	9	39	34	51
Liberec*	30	14	10	6	45	26	46
Jablonec	30	12	9	9	33	27	45
Ostrava	30	9	10	11	33	36	37
Drnovice	30	9	8	13	30	34	35
Pribram	30	9	8	13	30	41	35
Brno	30	9	6	15	30	42	33
Zlin	30	7	12	11	29	35	33
Chmel Blsany	30	7	11	12	25	38	32
Slovacko*	30	10	14	6	30	22	32
Mlada Boleslav	30	6	13	11	26	35	31
C Budejovice	30	6	7	17	28	39	25
Opava*	30	5	9	16	25	42	18

**Slovacko had 12pts deducted and Opava and Liberec 6pts for their part in a bribery scandal*

Relegated: Ceske Budejovice, Opava
Promoted: Siad Most, plus one other

CZECH CUP – Final

May 31 - Andruv stadium, Olomouc
Ostrava 2 (Metelka 54, Papadopoulos 88)
Slovacko 1 (Dostalek 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,251. **Ref:** Sedivy

DENMARK

May 7: AaB 3 AGF 1.
May 8: Esbjerg 3 Nordsjaelland 1; FC Copenhagen 0 Silkeborg 1; Midtjylland 1 Viborg 2; OB 1 Brondby 1; Randers 1 Herfolge 1.
May 15: Silkeborg 0 Midtjylland 1.
May 16: Brondby 5 FC Copenhagen 0; Viborg 2 Esbjerg 2; AGF 2 Herfolge 1; Nordsjaelland 0 AaB 1; OB 1 Randers 0.
May 19: Esbjerg 4 Silkeborg 0; FC Copenhagen 1 OB 1; AaB 5 Viborg 3; Midtjylland 3 Brondby 1; AGF 4 Randers 0; Herfolge 1 Nordsjaelland 0.
May 22: Brondby 4 Esbjerg 0; Viborg 2 Herfolge 1; Nordsjaelland 2 AGF 1; OB 3 Midtjylland 1; Silkeborg 1 AaB 0; Randers 0 FC Copenhagen 1.
May 28: AaB 3 Brondby 3.
May 29: Esbjerg 3 OB 2; Midtjylland 1 FC Copenhagen 0; AGF 1 Viborg 2; Nordsjaelland 2 Randers 0; Herfolge 1 Silkeborg 1.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brondby	30	17	9	4	50	22	60
FC Copenhagen	30	15	7	8	50	37	52
Midtjylland	30	15	5	10	42	39	50
AaB	30	14	7	9	55	39	49
Esbjerg	30	13	8	9	59	44	47
Viborg	30	12	9	9	38	39	45
OB	30	11	9	10	54	37	42
Silkeborg	30	11	7	12	43	47	40
AGF	30	11	5	14	45	47	38
Nordsjaelland	30	7	6	17	32	53	27
Herfolge	30	6	6	18	26	60	24
Randers	30	5	8	17	27	57	23

DANISH CUP – Final

May 5 - Parken, Copenhagen
Brondby 3 (Skoubo 41, Daugaard 76, Bagger 111)
Midtjylland 2 (Hansen 47, Pimpong 60)
Aet. **HT:** 1-0. **90mins:** 2-2. **Att:** 34,026. **Ref:** Fisker
Sent off: Pimpong (Midtjylland) 66min

ENGLAND

Saturday, May 7
Aston Villa 1 (Angel 61)
Manchester City 2 (S Wright-Phillips 5, Musampa 12) Att: 39,645

Blackburn 1 (Neill 6)
Fulham 3 (Malbranque 20, 77, McBride 53) Att: 18,991

Chelsea 1 (Makelele 90)
Charlton 0 Att: 42,065

Crystal Palace 2 (Hall 34, Ventola 72)
Southampton 2 (Crouch pen 37, Higginbotham 90) Att: 26,066

Everton 2 (Weir 43, Cahill 59)
Newcastle 0 Att: 40,438

Manchester Utd 1 (Giggs 21)
West Bromwich 1 (Earnshaw pen 63) Att: 67,827

Middlesbrough 1 (Boateng 11)
Tottenham 0 Att: 34,766

Norwich 1 (Ashton pen 45)
Birmingham 0 Att: 25,477

Portsmouth 1 (Aiyegbeni 72)
Bolton 1 (Diouf 11) Att: 20,188

Sunday, May 8
Arsenal 3 (Pires 25, Reyes 29, Fabregas 90)
Liverpool 1 (Gerrard 51) Att: 38,119

Tuesday, May 10
Manchester Utd 1 (Van Nistelrooy 8)
Chelsea 3 (Tiago 17, Gudjohnsen 61, J Cole 82) Att: 67,832

Wednesday, May 11
Arsenal 7 (Van Persie 8, Pires 12, 50, Vieira 37, Edu pen 70, Bergkamp 77, Flamini 85)
Everton 0 Att: 38,073

Sunday, May 15
Birmingham 2 (Pandiani 80, Heskey 90)
Arsenal 1 (Bergkamp 88) Att: 29,302

Bolton 3 (Jaidi 53, Davies 61, Giannakopoulos 66)
Everton 2 (Cahill 9, Carsley 63) Att: 27,701

Charlton 2 (Hughes 30, Fortune 82)
Crystal Palace 2 (Freedman 58, Johnson pen 71) Att: 26,870

Fulham 6 (McBride 10, 86, Diop 35, Knight 54, Malbranque 72, Cole 90)
Norwich 0 Att: 21,927

Liverpool 2 (Cisse 20, pen 27)
Aston Villa 1 (Barry 67) Att: 43,406

Manchester City 1 (Musampa 46)
Middlesbrough 1 (Hasselbaink 23) Att: 47,221

Newcastle 1 (Geremi og 33)
Chelsea 1 (Lampard pen 35) Att: 52,326

Southampton 1 (O'Shea og 10)
Manchester Utd 2 (Fletcher 19, Van Nistelrooy 63) Att: 32,066

Tottenham 0
Blackburn 0 Att: 35,797

West Bromwich 2 (Horsfield 58, Richardson 75)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 27,751

ENGLAND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	38	29	8	1	72	15	95
Arsenal	38	25	8	5	87	36	83
Man Utd	38	22	11	5	58	26	77
Everton	38	18	7	13	45	46	61
Liverpool	38	17	7	14	52	41	58
Bolton	38	16	10	12	49	44	58
Middlesbrough	38	14	13	11	53	46	55
Man City	38	13	13	12	47	39	52
Tottenham	38	14	10	14	47	41	52
Aston Villa	38	12	11	15	45	52	47
Charlton	38	12	10	16	42	58	46
Birmingham	38	11	12	15	40	46	45
Fulham	38	12	8	18	52	60	44
Newcastle	38	10	14	14	47	57	44
Blackburn	38	9	15	14	32	43	42
Portsmouth	38	10	9	19	43	59	39
West Brom	38	6	16	16	36	61	34
Crystal Palace	38	7	12	19	41	62	33
Norwich	38	7	12	19	42	77	33
Southampton	38	6	14	18	45	66	32

Relegated: Crystal Palace, Norwich, Southampton
Promoted: Sunderland, Wigan, West Ham

TOP GOALSCORERS

25	Thierry Henry (Arsenal)
21	Andy Johnson (Crystal Palace)
14	Robert Pires (Arsenal)
13	Yakubu Aiyegbeni (Portsmouth)
13	Jermain Defoe (Tottenham)
13	Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink (Middlesbrough)
13	Frank Lampard (Chelsea)

FA CUP – Final

May 21 - Millennium stadium, Cardiff
Arsenal 0
Manchester Utd 0
Aet. **Att:** 71,876. **Ref:** Styles
Arsenal 5-4 on pens

FRANCE

Friday, May 6
Bordeaux 0
Auxerre 0 Att: 20,586

Saturday, May 7
Bastia 2 (Jau 51, Hadji 87)
Istres 0 Att: 5,017

Lille 1 (Mirallas 85)
Paris SG 0 Att: 16,823

Marseille 2 (Batiles 39, Luyindula 67)
Caen 3 (Mazure 28, Valero 43, Watier 90) Att: 53,386

Metz 1 (Socrier 10)
Lens 1 (Jussie 48) Att: 19,802

Nice 0
Nantes 0 Att: 15,639

Rennes 0
Monaco 0 Att: 29,085

Sochaux 1 (Zairi 63)
Strasbourg 2 (Johansen 71, Pagis 88) Att: 18,519

Toulouse 0
Saint-Etienne 2 (Sakho 36, Feindouno 63) Att: 26,249

Sunday, May 8
Lyon 2 (Govou 36, Cacapa 64)
Ajaccio 1 (Demont 51) Att: 38,946

Saturday, May 14
Ajaccio 0
Nice 1 (Larbi 53) Att: 6,000

Auxerre 0
Marseille 0 Att: 21,000

Caen 2 (Watier 43, Zubar 90)
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 20,889

Istres 1 (Ourahou 80)
Toulouse 0 Att: 3,500

Lens 5 (Utaka 28, 42, 59, Carriere 57, Ouaddou og 84)
Rennes 2 (Frei 16, 62) Att: 35,327

Monaco 5 (Chevanton 8, 38, 45, Saviola 46, Adebayor 86)
Bastia 2 (Hadji 2, Chimbonda 58) Att: 9,863

Nantes 1 (Savinaud 20)
Lille 3 (Dumont 9, Schmitz 51, Debuchy 73) Att: 31,456

Paris SG 2 (Armand 90, Yepes 90)
Sochaux 2 (Santos 49, 58) Att: 39,926

Strasbourg 3 (Niang 24, Pagis 75, pen 90)
Metz 1 (Leca 36) Att: 23,959

Sunday, May 15
Lyon 5 (Malouda 24, Cris 34, 45, Govou 67, 84)
Bordeaux 1 (Riera 10) Att: 40,000

Saturday, May 21
Bastia 3 (Hadji 14, 37, Chimbonda 57)
Lens 1 (Cousin pen 20) Att: 5,702

Bordeaux 1 (Chamakh 79)
Monaco 1 (Squillaci 90) Att: 24,224

Lille 0
Ajaccio 2 (Ouadah 11, Robin 71) Att: 16,891

Marseille 0
Lyon 1 (Juninho 55) Att: 57,041

Metz 3 (Signorino 8, Obraniak 27, Tum 73)
Paris SG 2 (Pierre-Fanfan 51, Yepes 58) Att: 23,874

Nice 1 (Agali 29)
Auxerre 0 Att: 15,755

Rennes 4 (Maoulida 43, Didot 59, Frei 61, Kallstrom 86)
Strasbourg 0 Att: 28,149

Saint-Etienne 2 (Piquionne 69, Feindouno 75)
Istres 0 Att: 34,913

Sochaux 1 (Thebaux og 11)
Nantes 0 Att: 18,578

Toulouse 2 (Moreira 37, 58)
Caen 3 (Mazure 71, Ben Askar 80, Hengbart 83) Att: 18,996

Saturday, May 28

Ajaccio 3 (Waldir Lucas Pereira 13, Ouadah 53, Merlin 88)
Sochaux 1 (Kader 6) Att: 4,707

Auxerre 1 (Kalou 29)
Lille 3 (Odemwingie 27, Bodmer pen 49, Moussilou 88) Att: 13,679

Bordeaux 3 (Laslandes 17, Meriem pen 64, Francia 86)
Marseille 3 (Luyindula 22, pen 90, Fiorese 27) Att: 32,712

Istres 3 (Saifi 5, Chaussidiere 33, Ourahou 60)
Caen 2 (Mazure 29, Deroin 74) Att: 5,474

Lens 1 (Cousin 33)
Toulouse 0 Att: 37,470

Lyon 0
Nice 0 Att: 40,352

Monaco 1 (Chevanton 1)
Saint-Etienne 1 (Sable 10) Att: 17,512

Nantes 1 (Diallo 40)
Metz 0 Att: 36,267

Paris SG 1 (Pauleta 53)
Rennes 0 Att: 43,904

Strasbourg 2 (Niang 85, Farnerud 90)
Bastia 0 Att: 17,731

FRANCE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon	38	22	13	3	56	22	79
Lille	38	18	13	7	52	29	67
Monaco	38	15	18	5	52	35	63
Rennes	38	15	10	13	49	42	55
Marseille	38	15	10	13	47	42	55
Saint-Etienne	38	12	17	9	47	34	53
Lens	38	13	13	12	45	39	52
Auxerre	38	14	10	14	48	47	52
Paris SG	38	12	15	11	40	41	51
Sochaux	38	13	11	14	42	41	50
Strasbourg	38	12	12	14	42	43	48
Nice	38	10	16	12	38	45	46
Toulouse	38	12	10	16	36	43	46
Ajaccio	38	10	15	13	36	40	45
Bordeaux	38	8	20	10	37	41	44
Metz	38	10	14	14	33	45	44
Nantes	38	10	13	15	33	38	43
Caen	38	10	12	16	36	60	42
Bastia	38	11	8	19	32	48	41
Istres	38	6	14	18	25	51	32

Relegated: Caen, Bastia, Istres
Promoted: Nancy, Le Mans, Troyes

TOP GOALSCORERS
20 Alexander Frei (Rennes)
15 Mickael Pagis (Strasbourg)
14 Pauleta (Paris SG)

FRENCH CUP – semi-finals

May 10: Auxerre 2 Nimes 1.
May 11: Monaco 0 Sedan 1.

GEORGIA

GEORGIA – FINAL*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo Tbilisi	36	23	6	7	73	27	75
Torpedo Kutaisi	35	20	10	5	56	28	70
FC Tbilisi	35	21	6	8	60	37	69
Lokomotivi	36	16	15	5	42	24	63
Zestafoni	36	16	5	15	38	48	53
WIT Georgia	36	13	9	14	54	41	48
Sioni Bolnisi	36	12	4	20	35	56	40
Dinamo Batumi	36	9	12	15	35	33	39
Kolkheti	36	9	5	22	32	63	32
Dila Gori	36	2	4	30	20	88	10

**Pending decision on Torpedo-FC Tbilisi game, abandoned in 85th minute*

Relegated: Kolkheti, Dila Gori

GEORGIAN CUP – Final

May 26 - Boris Paichadze stadium, Tbilisi
Zestafoni 0
Lokomotivi 2 (Bobokhidze 55, Manchkhava 60)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Paniashvili

GERMANY

Saturday, May 7

Arminia Bielefeld 0
Schalke 2 (Lincoln pen 9, Ailton 90) Att: 26,601

Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Berbatov 27, 89, Voronin 58)
Hansa Rostock 0 Att: 22,500

Freiburg 1 (Bajramovic 73)
Kaiserslautern 2 (Blank 24, Zandi pen 40) Att: 23,000

Hertha 3 (Friedrich 63, Marcelinho pen 81, Madlung 87)
Wolfsburg 1 (Petrov 17) Att: 58,075

Mainz 2 (Auer 35, Thurk 59)
Bayern Munich 4 (Makaay 17, 82, 89, Ballack 42) Att: 20,300

Nurnberg 2 (Daun 21, Mintal 84)
Bochum 1 (Meichelbeck 90) Att: 44,650

Stuttgart 1 (Kuranyi 88)
Hannover 0 Att: 45,000

Sunday, May 8

Borussia Dortmund 1 (Rosicky 32)
Werder Bremen 0 Att: 81,300

Hamburg 0
Monchengladbach 0 Att: 52,648

Saturday, May 14

Bayern Munich 6 (Pizarro 8, Ballack 24, Makaay 31, pen 41, Deisler 44, 78)
Nurnberg 3 (Demichelis og 52, Slovak 80, 83) Att: 63,000

Bochum 2 (Misimovic 60, Lokvenc 71)
Stuttgart 0 Att: 30,980

Hannover 2 (Stajner 43, Barnetta 87)
Hamburg 1 (Benjamin 14) Att: 49,000

Hansa Rostock 1 (T Rasmussen pen 27)
Arminia Bielefeld 1 (Kuntzel 21) Att: 18,000

Mainz 3 (Abel 29, 47, Noveski 57)
Kaiserslautern 2 (Amanatidis 35, Jancker 86) Att: 20,300

Monchengladbach 0
Hertha 0 Att: 53,466

Schalke 1 (Waldoch 19)
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Kehl 17, Ricken 42) Att: 61,524

Werder Bremen 4 (Micoud 48, 90, Borowski 49, 52)
Freiburg 1 (Coulibaly 23) Att: 35,000

Wolfsburg 2 (Karhan 24, Brdaric 30)
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Franca 61, Bierofka 87) Att: 24,771

Saturday, May 21

Arminia Bielefeld 1 (Vata 35)
Wolfsburg 2 (Petrov pen 41, Brdaric 56) Att: 22,112

Bayer Leverkusen 5 (Berbatov 41, 58, 61, Voronin 59, Franca 69)
Monchengladbach 1 (Neuville 2) Att: 22,500

Borussia Dortmund 2 (Kruska 52, Koller 67)
Hansa Rostock 1 (Vorbeck 15) Att: 80,400

Freiburg 2 (Iashvili 11, Antar 78)
Schalke 3 (Sand 6, Bordon 55, 89) Att: 24,500

Hamburg 0
Bochum 1 (Diabang 4) Att: 54,178

Hertha 0
Hannover 0 Att: 74,500

Kaiserslautern 1 (Altintop 45)
Werder Bremen 2 (Borowski 13, Haedo Valdez 42) Att: 40,315

Nurnberg 1 (Mintal pen 18)
Mainz 2 (N Weiland 15, Thurk 87) Att: 41,886

Stuttgart 1 (Szabics 88)
Bayern Munich 3 (Ballack 27, Salihamidzic 30, Makaay 71) Att: 48,600

GERMANY – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern Munich	34	24	5	5	75	33	77
Schalke	34	20	3	11	56	46	63
Werder Bremen	34	18	5	11	68	37	59
Hertha	34	15	13	6	59	31	58
Stuttgart	34	17	7	10	54	40	58
B Leverkusen	34	16	9	9	65	44	57
B Dortmund	34	15	10	9	47	44	55
Hamburg	34	16	3	15	55	50	51
Wolfsburg	34	15	3	16	49	51	48
Hannover	34	13	6	15	34	36	45
Mainz	34	12	7	15	50	55	43
Kaiserslautern	34	12	6	16	43	52	42
A Bielefeld	34	11	7	16	37	49	40
Nurnberg	34	10	8	16	55	63	38
M'gladbach	34	8	12	14	35	51	36
Bochum	34	9	8	17	47	68	35
Hansa Rostock	34	7	9	18	31	65	30
Freiburg	34	3	9	22	30	75	18

Relegated: Bochum, Hansa Rostock, Freiburg
Promoted: Koln, Duisburg, Eintracht Frankfurt

TOP GOALSCORERS
24 Marek Mintal (Nurnberg)
22 Roy Makaay (Bayern Munich)
20 Dimitar Berbatov (Bayer Leverkusen)
18 Marcelinho (Hertha)

GERMAN CUP – Final

May 28 - Olympiastadion, Berlin
Schalke 1 (Lincoln pen 45)
Bayern Munich 2 (Makaay 42, Salihamidzic 76)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 74,359. **Ref:** Meyer

GREECE

May 8: PAOK 1 Panathinaikos 1; AEK 0 Ionikos 1; Aigaleo 2 Ergotelis 0; Panionios 1 Aris 1; Halkidona 2 Apollon 3; Iraklis 5 Kallithea 1; OFI 1 Xanthi 0; Kerkira 1 Olympiakos 3.
May 14: Ergotelis 1 Kerkira 1.
May 15: Panathinaikos 0 AEK 0; Olympiakos 3 Panionios 0; Aigaleo 2 Halkidona 1; Xanthi 1 Kallithea 0; Ionikos 0 OFI 0; Aris 0 Iraklis 2 (awarded); Apollon 2 PAOK 1.
May 25: PAOK 2 Aigaleo 4; AEK 3 Apollon 0; Panionios 2 Ergotelis 0; Iraklis 0 Olympiakos 1; OFI 1 Panathinaikos 2; Ionikos 1 Xanthi 1; Kallithea 3 Aris 1; Kerkira 1 Halkidona 3.

GREECE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	30	19	8	3	54	18	65
Panathinaikos	30	19	7	4	51	18	64
AEK	30	17	11	2	46	22	62
Xanthi	30	14	8	8	43	29	50
PAOK	30	13	7	10	43	39	46
Aigaleo	30	11	12	7	31	26	45
Iraklis	30	12	5	13	36	30	41
Halkidona	30	10	8	12	34	38	38
Kallithea	30	9	10	11	39	44	37
Ionikos	30	8	12	10	22	32	36
Panionios	30	8	11	11	25	32	35
Apollon	30	8	9	13	31	49	33
OFI	30	8	8	14	36	44	32
Aris*	30	5	13	12	26	37	25
Ergotelis	30	5	5	20	19	50	20
Kerkira	30	3	8	19	21	49	17

**3pts deducted because of crowd trouble during home game v Iraklis*

Relegated: Aris, Ergotelis, Kerkira
Promoted: AEL Larisa, Levadiakos, Akratitos

GREEK CUP – Final

May 21 - Panpeloponnisiako stadium, Patras
Olympiakos 3 (Djordjevic pen 56, Rivaldo 70, 90)
Aris 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** Kasnaferis

ESM
EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES
GOLDEN SHOE

ESM GOLDEN SHOE STANDINGS AT 29.05.05

POS	NAME	TEAM	GOALS	FACTOR	PTS
1	Diego Forlan	Villarreal (Spa)	25	2	50
	Thierry Henry	Arsenal (Eng)	25	2	50
3	Samuel Eto'o	Barcelona (Spa)	24	2	48
	Cristiano Lucarelli	Livorno (Ita)	24	2	48
	Marek Mintal	Nurnberg (Ger)	24	2	48
6	Fatih Tekke	Trabzonspor (Tur)	31	1.5	46.5
7	Alberto Gilardino	Parma (Ita)	23	2	46
8	Roy Makaay	Bayern Munich (Ger)	22	2	44
	Ricardo Oliveira	Betis (Spa)	22	2	44
10	Dirk Kuijt	Feyenoord (Hol)	29	1.5	43.5
11	Andy Johnson	Crystal Palace (Eng)	21	2	42
	Vincenzo Montella	Roma (Ita)	21	2	42
	Ronaldo	Real Madrid (Spa)	21	2	42
14	Martin Kamburov	Lokomotiv Plovdiv (Bul)	27	1.5	40.5
15	Dimitar Berbatov	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)	20	2	40
	Alexander Frei	Rennes (Fra)	20	2	40
	Luca Toni	Palermo (Ita)	20	2	40

For the latest standings, updated weekly, visit www.worldsoccer.com

HOLLAND

Friday, May 6
NAC 1 (Boussaboun 15)
RBC 2 (Hakansson 29, 89) Att: 12,400

Saturday, May 7
Ajax 4 (Babel 34, Grygera 37, De Jong 77, Haristeas 90)
RKC 0 Att: 48,672

Den Bosch 1 (Volmer 25)
Twente 0 Att: 5,444

Heerenveen 2 (Breuer 55, 57)
Willem II 2 (Bobson 22, Redan 33) Att: 18,300

Sunday, May 8
Den Haag 2 (Den Ouden 87, Elia 89)
AZ 1 (Perez 57) Att: 5,500

Groningen 4 (Nevland 6, 65, 72, Drent 67)
Roda JC 4 (Cisse 37, Sergio 39, Kone 62, 81) Att: 10,720

NEC 2 (Van den Eede pen 71, Niedzielan 86)
Feyenoord 0 Att: 11,750

PSV 4 (Vennegoor of Hesselink 2, 10, Cocu 12, Vogel 55)
De Graafschap 1 (Loval 84) Att: 32,000

Utrecht 1 (Keller 39)
Vitesse 2 (Rankovic 16, Schaars 90) Att: 18,550

Sunday, May 15
Den Haag 6 (Smith 24, Van der Leegte 26, Stroeve 28, Polak 42, Saeijs 68, Den Ouden 82)
NAC 2 (Cornelisse 8, Jenner 88) Att: 5,413

Groningen 1 (Buijs 75)
Heerenveen 2 (Berg Hestad 27, Huntelaar 60) Att: 12,500

NEC 3 (Van den Eede 10, Boutahar 43, 63)
De Graafschap 0 Att: 11,750

PSV 4 (Afellay 13, 71, Vennegoor of Hesselink 40, Van Bommel 52)
Feyenoord 2 (Kuijt 22, 51) Att: 33,000

RBC 3 (Hakansson 24, 77, Guijt 90)
Roda JC 1 (Cisse 35) Att: 4,400

RKC 2 (Martens 61, Vermaelen 81)
Den Bosch 0 Att: 7,500

Twente 3 (Culina 55, N'Kufo 66, Majstorovic 85)
AZ 0 Att: 13,100

Utrecht 0
Willem II 3 (Caluwe 53, Reuser 64, 84) Att: 18,910

Vitesse 0
Ajax 2 (Grygera 56, Van der Vaart 80) Att: 22,631

Sunday, May 22
Ajax 2 (Van der Vaart 57, De Ridder 77)
Groningen 1 (Nevland 44) Att: 49,747

AZ 1 (Huysegems 89)
RBC 3 (Jaliens og 36, De Groot 39, Hakansson 82) Att: 8,368

De Graafschap 1 (Loval 33)
Vitesse 2 (Benson 81, Amoah 90) Att: 11,000

Den Bosch 0
Utrecht 3 (Van den Bergh 9, 90, Verhaegh og 45) Att: 6,000

Feyenoord 6 (Goor 14, Ono 23, Kalou 38, Kuijt 46, 78, 86)
Den Haag 3 (Polak 52, Van der Gun 55, Den Ouden 62) Att: 35,000

Heerenveen 2 (Huntelaar 61, Breuer 82)
NEC 1 (Tininho 22) Att: 20,600

NAC 1 (Cornelisse 90)
Twente 1 (N'Kufo 55) Att: 9,620

Roda JC 0
PSV 0 Att: 15,500

Willem II 3 (Ceesay 17, Bobson 23, Caluwe 52)
RKC 0 Att: 13,100

HOLLAND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	34	27	6	1	89	18	87
Ajax	34	24	5	5	74	33	77
AZ	34	19	7	8	71	41	64
Feyenoord	34	19	5	10	90	51	62
Heerenveen	34	18	6	10	64	52	60
Twente	34	15	9	10	48	38	54
Vitesse	34	16	6	12	53	49	54
Roda JC	34	13	8	13	60	55	47
RKC	34	13	8	13	44	51	47
Willem II	34	13	6	15	44	56	45
Utrecht	34	12	8	14	40	43	44
Groningen	34	11	7	16	50	58	40
NEC	34	9	10	15	41	47	37
Den Haag	34	10	6	18	44	59	36
NAC	34	9	8	17	43	67	35
RBC	34	10	2	22	38	77	32
De Graafschap	34	4	7	23	32	78	19
Den Bosch	34	5	4	25	23	75	19

Relegated: Den Bosch (RBC & De Graafschap are in relegation/promotion play-offs)
Promoted: Heracles

TOP GOALSCORERS
29 Dirk Kuijt (Feyenoord)
20 Salomon Kalou (Feyenoord)
19 Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink (PSV)

DUTCH CUP – Final

May 29 - De Kuip stadium, Rotterdam
Willem II 0
PSV 4 (Bouma 45, Cocu 51, Park 74, Vennegoor of Hesselink 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Braamhaar

HUNGARY

May 7: Nyiregyhaza 2 Diosgyor 2; Papa 1 Pecs 1; Ujpest 3 Zalaegerszeg 2; Bekescsaba 0 MTK 1; Kaposvar 2 Fehervar 1; Vasas 1 Gyor 0; Matav 2 Honved 0.
May 8: Ferencvaros 0 Debrecen 0.
May 14: Fehervar 5 Nyiregyhaza 3; MTK 0 Kaposvar 0; Zalaegerszeg 5 Papa 2; Honved 1 Ujpest 1; Gyor 1 Matav 0; Diosgyor 0 Vasas 0; Debrecen 5 Bekescsaba 1.
May 15: Pecs 2 Ferencvaros 0.
May 18: Matav 1 MTK 1.
May 21: Bekescsaba 2 Kaposvar 3; Nyiregyhaza 0 MTK 5; Vasas 1 Fehervar 1; Matav 0 Diosgyor 1; Papa 1 Honved 0; Ferencvaros 4 Zalaegerszeg 2; Debrecen 3 Pecs 1.
May 22: Ujpest 4 Gyor 1.
May 26: Kaposvar 1 Nyiregyhaza 1; Zalaegerszeg 2 Debrecen 1; Honved 0 Ferencvaros 1; Gyor 3 Papa 0; Diosgyor 1 Ujpest 3; Fehervar 1 Matav 1; MTK 2 Vasas 1; Pecs 5 Bekescsaba 0.

HUNGARY – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Debrecen	30	19	5	6	57	25	62
Ferencvaros	30	17	5	8	56	31	56
MTK*	30	16	9	5	47	26	56
Ujpest	30	15	10	5	60	34	55
Gyor	30	16	6	8	44	32	54
Zalaegerszeg	30	13	5	12	48	45	44
Matav	30	11	9	10	44	44	42
Fehervar**	30	11	10	9	44	36	40
Diosgyor	30	11	4	15	39	45	37
Pecs	30	9	9	12	33	35	36
Honved	30	10	5	15	37	58	35
Kaposvar	30	8	10	12	34	47	34
Vasas	30	10	3	17	34	48	33
Papa	30	8	6	16	40	47	30
Nyiregyhaza	30	5	11	14	38	63	26
Bekescsaba***	30	4	7	19	26	65	11

**1pt deducted for non-payment of wages to a former coach*
***3pts deducted for non-payment of three former players*
****2pts deducted per match played from 27th round (ie 8 in total) for non-payment of debt to federation*

Relegated: Nyiregyhaza, Bekescsaba
Promoted: Tatabanya, Rakospalotai

HUNGARIAN CUP – Final

May 11 - Sostoi stadium, Szekesfehervar
Ferencvaros 1 (Lipcsei 49)
Matav 5 (Toth 13, Baranyos 38, Balasko pen 45, 57, A Horvath 73)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 4,600. **Ref:** Trivkovic (Cro)
Sent off: Rosa 39min, Szucs 45min, Kapic 68min (all Ferencvaros); Pinter (Matav) 79min

ISRAEL

ISRAEL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maccabi Haifa	33	21	8	4	66	27	71
M Petach Tikva	33	16	12	5	47	24	60
SC Ashdod	33	15	5	13	48	44	50
Beitar J'salem	33	13	8	12	46	44	47
Upper Nazareth	33	12	10	11	46	46	46
Bnei Yehuda	33	12	8	13	40	46	44
H Petach Tikva	33	11	9	13	41	46	42
M Tel Aviv	33	10	10	13	32	42	40
H Tel Aviv	33	10	9	14	30	34	39
H Bnei Sakhnin	33	10	6	17	40	51	36
Hapoel Haifa	33	9	8	16	36	44	35
H Be'er Sheva	33	7	11	15	33	57	32

Relegated: Hapoel Haifa, Hapoel Be'er Sheva
Promoted: Hapoel Kfar Sava, Maccabi Netanya

ISRAELI CUP – Final

May 18
Maccabi Tel Aviv 2 (Reis 25, Mesika 96)
Maccabi Herzliya 2 (Hallawani 15, Rubin 111)
Aet. **HT:** 1-1. **90mins:** 1-1
Maccabi Tel Aviv 5-3 on pens

ITALY

Sunday, May 8
Atalanta 2 (Adriano 48, Bernardini 53)
Messina 1 (Zampagna 37) Att: 14,025

Brescia 0
Inter 3 (Martins 55, 66, Vieri 90) Att: 6,895

Cagliari 0
Palermo 0 Att: 9,500

Chievo 1 (Mandelli 86)
Fiorentina 2 (Miccoli 43, Bojinov 79) Att: 20,236

Lazio 0
Udinese 1 (Iaquinta 65) Att: 33,604

Livorno 3 (C Lucarelli pen 35, 55, Colombo 72)
Siena 6 (Argilli 15, Chiesa 38, Vergassola 53, 60, Maccarone 62, 81) Att: 14,815

Milan 0
Juventus 1 (Trezeguet 28) Att: 79,232

Parma 2 (Morfeo 63, Gilardino pen 79)
Roma 1 (Cassano 4) Att: 24,463

Reggina 1 (Esteves 32)
Bologna 1 (Bellucci 16) Att: 14,067

Sampdoria 3 (Diana 23, Kutuzov 32, Edusei 87)
Lecce 0 Att: 22,469

Sunday, May 15
Bologna 1 (Bellucci 90)
Brescia 2 (Del Nero 49, Stankevicius 77) Att: 16,500

Fiorentina 0
Atalanta 0 Att: 43,384

Inter 1 (Vieri 12)
Livorno 0 Att: 52,646

Juventus 2 (Del Piero 6, Ibrahimovic 23)
Parma 0 Att: 40,000

Lecce 2 (Konan 46, Vucinic 82)
Milan 2 (Kaladze 12, Shevchenko 53) Att: 21,628

Messina 2 (D'Agostino 45, Amoruso 87)
Cagliari 1 (Alvarez 52) Att: 30,000

Palermo 1 (Barone 90)
Reggina 1 (Mesto 36) Att: 33,046

Roma 0
Lazio 0 Att: 66,000

Siena 0
Chievo 1 (Semioli 80) Att: 9,000

Udinese 1 (Castellini og 25)
Sampdoria 1 (Pisano 36) Att: 20,000

Friday, May 20
Milan 3 (Serginho 8, 16, Tomasson 32)
Palermo 3 (Costacurta og 9, Toni pen 77, Barone 79) Att: 60,872

Sunday, May 22
Atalanta 0
Roma 1 (Cassano 50) Att: 21,612

Brescia 2 (Di Biagio 62, Milanetto 72)
Messina 1 (Amoruso 90) Att: 8,491

Cagliari 1 (Esposito 67)
Udinese 1 (Iaquinta 48) Att: 13,000

Chievo 1 (Mandelli 81)
Bologna 0 Att: 17,515

Lazio 1 (Siviglia 18)
Fiorentina 1 (Maresca 2) Att: 45,221

Livorno 2 (Protti 47, C Lucarelli 56)
Juventus 2 (Nedved 10, Trezeguet 66) Att: 19,756

Parma 0
Siena 0 Att: 20,541

Reggina 2 (Bonazzoli 9, Paredes 31)
Lecce 2 (Vucinic 15, 43) Att: 19,294

Sampdoria 0
Inter 1 (Adriano 35) Att: 31,765

Sunday, May 29
Bologna 0
Sampdoria 0 Att: 30,796

Fiorentina 3 (Miccoli pen 43, Jorgensen 59, Rigano 67)
Brescia 0 Att: 44,808

Inter 0
Reggina 0 Att: 50,883

Juventus 4 (Del Piero 44, Trezeguet 51, 73, Appiah 60)
Cagliari 2 (Zola 61, 87) Att: 52,762

Lecce 3 (Pinardi 30, Vucinic 41, Dalla Bona 47)
Parma 3 (Morfeo 22, Bresciano 43, Gilardino 56) Att: 21,528

Messina 1 (Zampagna 71)
Livorno 1 (C Lucarelli 84) Att: 27,380

Palermo 3 (Toni 3, 65, Brienza 61)
Lazio 3 (Rocchi 43, Bazzani 71, Muzzi 88) Att: 33,074

Roma 0
Chievo 0 Att: 55,386

Siena 2 (Chiesa 8, Argilli 81)
Atalanta 1 (Budan 62) Att: 10,124

Udinese 1 (Di Michele 56)
Milan 1 (Serginho 86) Att: 21,397

ITALY – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Juventus	38	26	8	4	67	27	86
Milan	38	23	10	5	63	28	79
Inter	38	18	18	2	65	37	72
Udinese	38	17	11	10	56	40	62
Sampdoria	38	17	10	11	42	29	61
Palermo	38	12	17	9	48	44	53
Messina	38	12	12	14	44	52	48
Roma	38	11	12	15	55	58	45
Livorno	38	11	12	15	49	60	45
Lazio	38	11	11	16	48	53	44
Lecce	38	10	14	14	66	73	44
Cagliari	38	10	14	14	51	60	44
Reggina	38	10	14	14	36	45	44
Siena	38	9	16	13	44	55	43
Chievo	38	11	10	17	32	49	43
Fiorentina	38	9	15	14	42	50	42
Bologna	38	9	15	14	33	36	42
Parma	38	10	12	16	48	65	42
Brescia	38	11	8	19	37	54	41
Atalanta	38	8	11	19	34	45	35

Relegated: Brescia, Atalanta (Bologna & Parma will play off to stay up)
Promoted: Empoli, plus two others

TOP GOALSCORERS
24 Cristiano Lucarelli (Livorno)
23 Alberto Gilardino (Parma)
21 Vincenzo Montella (Roma)
20 Luca Toni (Palermo)
19 Mirko Vucinic (Lecce)
17 Andrii Shevchenko (Milan)

ITALIAN CUP – semi-finals, 1st legs

May 11: Roma 1 Udinese 1.
May 12: Cagliari 1 Inter 1.

Semi-finals, 2nd legs

May 18: Inter 3 Cagliari 1 *Inter 4-2 on agg.*
May 19: Udinese 1 Roma 2 *Roma 3-2 on agg.*

LIECHTENSTEIN

LIECHTENSTEIN CUP – Final

May 5 - Rheinpark stadium, Vaduz
Vaduz 4 (Manojlovic 62, Martin Stocklasa 74, Sumiala 88, 90)
Eschen-Mauren 1 (Nigg 45)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,050. **Ref:** Figaroli

LUXEMBOURG

LUXEMBOURG – CHAMP'SHIP POOL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
F91 Dudelange	28	22	4	2	74	15	70
E Ettelbruck	28	20	4	4	68	29	64
Jeunesse Esch	28	13	6	9	58	45	45
Vic Rosport	28	13	5	10	45	47	44

RELEGATION POOL A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alliance 01	28	12	5	11	45	54	41
Grevenmacher	28	11	7	10	57	40	40
Wiltz 71	28	8	2	18	30	56	26
Union L'bourg	28	6	7	15	26	53	25

RELEGATION POOL B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Swift Hesp'ge	28	11	6	11	39	46	39
CS Petange	28	10	5	13	50	45	35
Avenir Beggen	28	6	6	16	37	60	24
Spora L'bourg	28	5	5	18	29	68	20

Relegated: Union Luxembourg, Spora Luxembourg
Promoted: Kaerjeng, Rumelange

Division split into championship and relegation pools after 22 rounds. All points and goals carried forward. Final six games played against teams in own pool

LUXEMBOURG CUP – Final

May 14 - Jose Barthel stadium, Luxembourg
Cebra 0
CS Petange 5 (Dervisevic 47, Dutheil 67, 83, Soraire 69, Peinado 90)
HT: 0-0

MACEDONIA

MACEDONIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rabotnicki	33	25	3	5	66	23	78
Vardar	33	22	6	5	68	34	72
Pobeda	33	16	7	10	59	49	55
Sileks	33	15	6	12	56	37	51
Skendija	33	15	5	13	59	40	50
Baskimi	33	14	7	12	53	47	49
Belasica	33	14	6	13	53	47	48
Bregalnica K	33	14	6	13	55	60	48
Cementarnica*	33	13	7	13	54	50	43
Madzari	33	12	5	16	35	46	41
Sloga	33	5	2	26	37	80	17
Napredok	33	1	4	28	17	99	7

**3pts deducted for walking off pitch during game at Sileks*

Relegated: Sloga, Napredok (Cementarnica & Madzari are in relegation/promotion play-offs)
Promoted: Vlazrimi, Makedonija

MACEDONIAN CUP – Final

May 24 - Gradski stadium, Skopje
Baskimi 2 (Presilski 76, 90)
Madzari 1 (Aleksoski 11)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 10,000
Sent off: Georgievski (Madzari)

MALTA

MALTA – CHAMPIONSHIP POOL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	
Sliema	28	18	7	3	47	23	40	[21]
Birkirkara	28	15	9	4	69	36	38	[16]
Hibernians	28	14	11	3	49	32	35	[18]
Valletta	28	16	4	8	57	41	34	[18]
Marsaxlokk	28	8	6	14	41	47	17	[13]
Floriana	28	7	7	14	28	39	16	[12]

RELEGATION POOL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	
Pieta	24	8	5	11	44	38	20	[10]
Msida St J	24	7	8	9	38	41	19	[8]
St Patrick	24	5	3	16	27	56	14	[5]
Lija Athletic	24	3	2	19	13	60	8	[4]

Relegated: St Patrick, Lija Athletic
Promoted: Hamrun Spartans, Mosta

Division split into championship and relegation pools after 18 rounds, with teams carrying forward half their points (figure in brackets) from regular season and all goals. All remaining games played against teams in own pool

MALTESE CUP – Final

May 20
Birkirkara 2 (L Galea 52, M Galea 84)
Msida St Joseph 1 (Boni 83)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Borg
Sent off: Zammit (Msida St Joseph) 53min

MOLDOVA

MOLDOVAN CUP – Final

May 21 - Republican stadium, Chisinau
Dacia 0
Nistru 1 (Zharov 89)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,500. **Ref:** Orlic

NORTHERN IRELAND

NORTHERN IRELAND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Glentoran	30	24	2	4	73	22	74
Linfield	30	22	6	2	78	23	72
Portadown	30	18	4	8	64	29	58
Dungannon	30	15	5	10	57	39	50
Limavady	30	13	9	8	52	36	48
Coleraine	30	14	5	11	62	47	47
Lisburn	30	13	8	9	49	42	47
Ballymena	30	11	12	7	40	37	45
Institute	30	11	3	16	36	50	36
Newry	30	10	5	15	38	63	35
Cliftonville	30	9	7	14	29	44	34
Loughgall	30	8	6	16	34	53	30
Larne	30	7	7	16	31	60	28
Ards	30	6	8	16	33	54	26
Crusaders	30	5	9	16	27	48	24
Omagh	30	5	2	23	32	88	17

Relegated: Crusaders, Omagh
Promoted: Armagh City, Glenavon

IRISH CUP – Final

May 7 - Windsor Park, Belfast
Portadown 5 (Arkins 15, 59, Convery 34, M McCann 36, Kelly 48)
Larne 1 (Ogden 3)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Malcolm

NORWAY

May 8: Aalesund 0 Tromso 1; Start 4 Odd Grenland 0; Viking 2 Molde 3; Bodo/Glimt 0 Valerenga 1; Lillestrom 1 Ham-Kam 0; Lyn 3 Rosenborg 2.
May 9: Fredrikstad 2 Brann 3.
May 16: Molde 2 Aalesund 2; Brann 6 Lillestrom 2; Ham-Kam 0 Start 2; Valerenga 0 Fredrikstad 0; Rosenborg 0 Viking 2; Odd Grenland 0 Lyn 2; Tromso 2 Bodo/Glimt 2.
May 22: Start 3 Brann 2; Viking 1 Odd Grenland 0; Bodo/Glimt 0 Aalesund 0; Lillestrom 2 Valerenga 1; Lyn 1 Ham-Kam 0; Rosenborg 1 Molde 1.
May 23: Fredrikstad 4 Tromso 2.
May 29: Aalesund 1 Fredrikstad 0; Molde 1 Bodo/Glimt 1; Brann 3 Lyn 0; Ham-Kam 0 Viking 0; Odd Grenland 0 Rosenborg 5; Tromso 1 Lillestrom 1.
May 30: Valerenga 1 Start 1.

NORWAY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Start	9	6	2	1	20	10	20
Valerenga	9	5	2	2	13	9	17
Brann	9	5	1	3	22	13	16
Lyn	9	4	3	2	14	9	15
Viking	9	4	2	3	13	12	14
Lillestrom	9	4	2	3	12	15	14
Fredrikstad	9	3	4	2	12	10	13
Rosenborg	9	3	3	3	15	10	12
Tromso	9	2	4	3	9	11	10
Bodo/Glimt	9	2	3	4	10	11	9
Aalesund	9	2	3	4	10	14	9
Molde	9	2	3	4	11	19	9
Ham-Kam	9	2	2	5	6	10	8
Odd Grenland	9	1	2	6	5	19	5

POLAND

May 6: Cracovia 0 Wisla K 1.
May 7: Gornik Z 0 Gornik L 3; Legia 3 Lech 0; Zaglebie 3 Polonia 0; Amica 1 Katowice 0; Pogon 2 Wisla P 0.
May 8: Odra 1 Groclin 2.
May 13: Polonia 2 Cracovia 3; Lech 2 Gornik Z 1.
May 14: Gornik L 1 Pogon 1; Wisla P 2 Amica 0; Katowice 2 Zaglebie 0; Groclin 3 Legia 2; Wisla K 3 Odra 1.
May 21: Lech 3 Gornik L 0; Gornik Z 0 Groclin 1; Odra 2 Polonia 1; Cracovia 2 Katowice 0; Zaglebie 0 Wisla P 1; Amica 0 Pogon 0.
May 22: Legia 5 Wisla K 1.
May 24: Groclin 1 Lech 0.
May 25: Gornik L 1 Amica 0; Pogon 1 Zaglebie 1; Wisla P 3 Cracovia 0; Katowice 1 Odra 1; Polonia 0 Legia 5; Wisla K 2 Gornik Z 1.

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla K	24	18	5	1	66	20	59
Groclin	24	16	2	6	46	25	50
Legia	24	12	7	5	40	19	43
Cracovia	24	11	4	9	31	24	37
Wisla P	24	11	4	9	34	30	37
Amica	24	9	7	8	25	25	34
Gornik L	24	9	5	10	34	35	32
Gornik Z	24	7	7	10	27	28	28
Lech	24	8	4	12	29	39	28
Pogon	24	6	10	8	28	38	28
Zaglebie	24	6	9	9	29	38	27
Polonia	24	7	5	12	26	50	26
Odra	24	6	4	14	24	37	22
Katowice	24	3	5	16	23	54	14

PORTUGAL

Friday, May 6
Belenenses 1 (Jose Pedro 24)
Nacional 0

Saturday, May 7
Boavista 1 (Guga pen 79)
Sporting Braga 2 (Joao Tomas 22, 37)

Penafiel 1 (N'Doye 61)
Benfica 0

Sunday, May 8
Beira Mar 0
Academica 0

Estoril 2 (Vargas 29, Hugo Santos 71)
Gil Vicente 0

Moreirense 1 (Nei 9)
FC Porto 1 (Helder Postiga 76)

Rio Ave 0
Maritimo 0

Uniao Leiria 0
Setubal 2 (Igor 78, 90)

Monday, May 9
Sporting Lisbon 1 (Tello 58)
Guimaraes 0

Saturday, May 14
Academica 0
Moreirense 4 (Manoel 24, Nei 66, 87, Eriverton 75)

Benfica 1 (Luisao 83)
Sporting Lisbon 0

Gil Vicente 1 (Nandinho 49)
Belenenses 0

Guimaraes 2 (Romeu 4, Luis Mario 90)
Boavista 0

Maritimo 2 (Manduca 7, 34)
Uniao Leiria 0

Nacional 1 (Marcelo 67)
Penafiel 3 (Fernando Aguiar 4, Wesley 18, 83)

Rio Ave 0
FC Porto 2 (McCarthy 56, Leandro 79)

Setubal 2 (Meyong 46, Helio 77)
Estoril 2 (Fellahi 7, Amoreirinha 90)

Sporting Braga 1 (Cesinha 37)
Beira Mar 1 (Tanque Silva 4)

Sunday, May 22
Beira Mar 2 (Rui Lima pen 79, Tininho 85)
Guimaraes 2 (Romeu 8, Silva 11)

Belenenses 0
Setubal 0

Boavista 1 (Eder 42)
Benfica 1 (Simao pen 38)

Estoril 0
Maritimo 1 (Silas 88)

Moreirense 2 (Eriverton 83, Nei 84)
Sporting Braga 1 (Joao Tomas 6)

Penafiel 1 (Wesley 7)
Gil Vicente 3 (Carlos Carneiro 37, Nandinho 53, Gregory 83)

FC Porto 1 (Ibson 60)
Academica 1 (Joeano 89)

Sporting Lisbon 2 (Avalos og 43, Custodio 54)
Nacional 4 (Andre Pinto 6, 24, Alexandre Goulart 14, Bruno 89)

Uniao Leiria 0
Rio Ave 3 (Evandro 7, Naciri 35, Paulo Cesar 70)

PORTUGAL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Benfica	34	19	8	7	51	31	65
FC Porto	34	17	11	6	39	26	62
Sporting Lisbon	34	18	7	9	66	36	61
Sporting Braga	34	16	10	8	45	28	58
Guimaraes	34	15	9	10	38	29	54
Boavista	34	13	11	10	39	43	50
Maritimo	34	12	13	9	39	32	49
Rio Ave	34	10	17	7	35	35	47
Belenenses	34	13	7	14	38	34	46
Setubal	34	11	11	12	46	45	44
Penafiel	34	13	4	17	39	53	43
Nacional	34	12	5	17	46	48	41
Gil Vicente	34	11	7	16	34	40	40
Academica	34	9	11	14	29	41	38
Uniao Leiria	34	8	14	12	29	36	38
Moreirense	34	7	13	14	30	43	34
Estoril	34	8	6	20	38	55	30
Beira Mar	34	6	12	16	30	56	30

Relegated: Moreirense, Estoril, Beira Mar
Promoted: Pacos Ferreira, Naval, Estrela Amadora

TOP GOALSCORERS
25 Liedson (Sporting Lisbon)
15 Joao Tomas (Sporting Braga)
15 Simao Sabrosa (Benfica)
14 Wesley (Penafiel)
12 Antchouet (Belenenses)

PORTUGUESE CUP – Final

May 29 - National stadium, Lisbon
Benfica 1 (Simao pen 4)
Setubal 2 (Manuel Jose 25, Meyong 72)
HT: 1-1

ROMANIA

May 7: Poli Timisoara 2 U Craiova 0; National 2 Sportul 1; Gloria 0 Dinamo 1; Bacau 1 Farul 0; CFR Cluj 1 Poli Iasi 1.
May 8: Rapid 2 Apulum 2; Otelul 1 Steaua 0; Brasov 0 Arges 1.
May 13: U Craiova 1 Gloria 1; Apulum 0 Otelul 4.
May 14: Steaua 1 CFR Cluj 0; Sportul 1 Bacau 0; Poli Iasi 1 National 2; Arges 0 Poli Timisoara 0.
May 15: Farul 3 Brasov 2; Dinamo 2 Rapid 2.

May 18: Apulum 1 Dinamo 3; Brasov 0 Sportul 1; Bacau 0 Poli Iasi 1; Gloria 3 Arges 0; National 1 Steaua 0; Otelul 1 CFR Cluj 2; Poli Timisoara 1 Farul 0; Rapid 4 U Craiova 0.
May 21: Arges 0 Rapid 0; Farul 1 Gloria 0; Poli Iasi 2 Brasov 1; Sportul 0 Poli Timisoara 0; Steaua 2 Bacau 0.
May 22: CFR Cluj 0 National 1; Dinamo 4 Otelul 0; U Craiova 1 Apulum 2.
May 28: Apulum 1 Arges 3; Brasov 0 Steaua 1; Dinamo 5 U Craiova 0; Bacau 2 CFR Cluj 0; Gloria 0 Sportul 5; Otelul 0 National 2; Poli Timisoara 2 Poli Iasi 0; Rapid 3 Farul 1.

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Steaua	29	18	6	5	45	17	60
Dinamo	29	19	2	8	59	30	59
Rapid	29	16	8	5	51	27	56
National	29	16	6	7	48	32	54
Farul	29	14	7	8	38	28	49
Poli Timisoara	29	13	6	10	36	32	45
Sportul	29	12	8	9	37	27	44
Otelul	29	11	4	14	25	32	37
Arges	29	8	12	9	32	36	36
Poli Iasi	29	9	8	12	27	41	35
Bacau	29	8	9	12	19	26	33
CFR Cluj	29	8	9	12	31	43	33
Gloria	29	9	5	15	38	45	32
Apulum	29	6	8	15	28	58	26
Brasov	29	5	6	18	27	43	21
U Craiova	29	4	8	17	24	48	20

ROMANIAN CUP – Final

May 11 - Cotroceni stadium, Bucharest
Dinamo 1 (Grigorie 6)
Farul 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Duhamel (Fra)

RUSSIA

May 14: Dinamo 1 Amkar 2; Lokomotiv 4 Rostov 0.
May 15: Tom 0 Spartak 1; Terek 0 FC Moscow 0; Alaniya 4 Rubin 3; Kryliya Sovetov 1 Shinnik 0.
May 21: Rostov 0 Dinamo 3; Rubin 1 Terek 1; FC Moscow 4 Tom 1; Shinnik 1 Zenit 0.
May 22: Amkar 0 Alaniya 0; Saturn 1 Kryliya Sovetov 1; Torpedo 0 Lokomotiv 1; Spartak 1 CSKA 3.
May 28: Tom 1 Rubin 2; Terek 2 Amkar 2; Alaniya 0 Rostov 0; Torpedo 0 Shinnik 0; Zenit 1 Saturn 0; Kryliya Sovetov 1 Spartak 3; Lokomotiv 4 Dinamo 1.

RUSSIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lokomotiv	10	5	5	0	14	3	20
Spartak	10	6	1	3	19	10	19
FC Moscow	9	5	3	1	10	2	18
Zenit	10	5	2	3	16	10	17
Torpedo	9	4	3	2	12	5	15
Rubin	10	4	3	3	12	12	15
Kryliya Sovetov	10	3	4	3	9	12	13
Dinamo	10	4	0	6	12	20	12
Amkar	10	2	6	2	8	10	12
CSKA	6	3	2	1	11	2	11
Saturn	9	3	2	4	8	7	11
Shinnik	9	2	5	2	7	7	11
Tom	10	2	3	5	7	13	9
Alaniya	10	2	3	5	8	17	9
Terek	10	2	3	5	8	17	9
Rostov	10	0	3	7	4	18	3

RUSSIAN CUP – Final

May 29 - Lokomotiv stadium, Moscow
CSKA 1 (Zhirkov 68)
FC Khimki 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Kayumov

SAN MARINO

Championship Final

May 11
Domagnano 2 (Casadei 51, Fambri 74)
Murata 1 (Cecchini 57)
HT: 0-0

SCOTLAND

Saturday, May 7
Dundee Utd 1 (McIntyre 16)
Kilmarnock 1 (Boyd 35) Att: 6,576

Dunfermline 5 (Derek Young 2, 29, 64 MacDonald og 33, Skerla 39)
Dundee 0 Att: 8,313

Inverness 0
Livingston 1 (Dair 29) Att: 3,021

Motherwell 2 (Craigan 16, 49)
Hibernian 2 (Caldwell 81, Konte 90) Att: 8,903

Rangers 2 (Buffel 9, Andrews 42)
Hearts 1 (Andrews og 84) Att: 49,342

Sunday, May 8
Celtic 2 (Hartson 47, 71)
Aberdeen 0 Att: 59,498

Saturday, May 14
Dundee 1 (Sancho 49)
Inverness 1 (Fox 88) Att: 6,691

Hibernian 1 (Riordan 51)
Aberdeen 2 (Mackie 28, 69) Att: 15,288

Kilmarnock 2 (Boyd 75, Johnston 85)
Livingston 0 Att: 4,184

Rangers 4 (Buffel 12, 57, Arveladze 17, 54)
Motherwell 1 (Andrews og 89) Att: 49,495

Sunday, May 15
Dundee Utd 0
Dunfermline 1 (Mason 89) Att: 10,763

Hearts 1 (Hartley 71)
Celtic 2 (Thompson 25, Beattie 77) Att: 15,927

Saturday, May 21
Inverness 0
Dundee Utd 1 (Robson pen 82) Att: 5,479

Kilmarnock 4 (Locke 26, Dodds 46, Boyd 54, McDonald 64)
Dunfermline 0 Att: 5,100

Livingston 1 (Easton 26)
Dundee 1 (MacDonald 18) Att: 8,968

Sunday, May 22
Aberdeen 2 (Byrne 45, Adams 49)
Hearts 0 Att: 16,155

Hibernian 0
Rangers 1 (Novo 59) Att: 17,450

Motherwell 2 (McDonald 88, 90)
Celtic 1 (Sutton 29) Att: 12,944

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TEAM OF THE MONTH

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MAY 2005 – HOW THEY VOTED

A BOLA (Por)
Dudek (Liverpool); Cafu (Milan), Luisao (Benfica), Carragher (Liverpool), Maldini (Milan); Gerrard (Liverpool), Kaka (Milan), Daniel Carvalho (CSKA Moscow); Crespo (Milan), Forlan (Villarreal), Del Piero (Juventus)

FANATIK (Tur)
Dudek (Liverpool); Thuram (Juventus), Terry (Chelsea), Alex (PSV); Essien (Lyon), Lampard (Chelsea), Gerrard (Liverpool), Cocu (PSV), Ballack (Bayern Munich); Makaay (Bayern Munich), Eto'o (Barcelona)

GAZZETTA DELLO SPORT (Ita)
Dudek (Liverpool); Carragher (Liverpool), Cannavaro (Juventus), Maldini (Milan); Camoranesi (Juventus), Gerrard (Liverpool), Daniel Carvalho (CSKA Moscow), Park (PSV); Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Eto'o (Barcelona), Simao (Benfica)

SPORT EXPRESS (Rus)
Dudek (Liverpool); Carragher (Liverpool), Hyypia (Liverpool), Maldini (Milan); Lampard (Chelsea), Gerrard (Liverpool), Daniel Carvalho (CSKA Moscow), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Zhirkov (CSKA Moscow); Crespo (Milan), Ibrahimovic (Juventus)

VOETBAL INTL (Hol)
Dudek (Liverpool); Carragher (Liverpool), A Berezutsky (CSKA Moscow), Zambrotta (Juventus); Gerrard (Liverpool), Kaka (Milan), D Carvalho (CSKA Moscow), Riise (Liverpool); Makaay (Bayern Munich), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Crespo (Milan)

DON BALON (Spa)
Dudek (Liverpool); Carragher (Liverpool), Cannavaro (Juventus), Cris (Lyon); Simao (Benfica), Gerrard (Liverpool), Daniel Carvalho (CSKA Moscow), Ronaldinho (Barcelona); C Lucarelli (Livorno), Makaay (Bayern Munich), Fatih Tekke (Trabzonspor)

FOOT (Blg)
Cech (Chelsea); Cannavaro (Juventus), Terry (Chelsea), Lucio (Bayern Munich); Lampard (Chelsea), Gerrard (Liverpool), Daniel Carvalho (CSKA Moscow), Ballack (Bayern Munich); Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Ibrahimovic (Juventus), Forlan (Villarreal)

KICKER (Ger)
Dudek (Liverpool); A Berezutsky (CSKA Moscow), Carragher (Liverpool), Maldini (Milan); Juninho (Lyon), Gerrard (Liverpool), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Daniel Carvalho (CSKA Moscow); Giuly (Barcelona), Makaay (Bayern Munich), Crespo (Milan)

TIPS BLADET (Den)
Dudek (Liverpool); Carragher (Liverpool), Cannavaro (Juventus), Senderos (Arsenal); Van Bommel (PSV), Gerrard (Liverpool), Kaka (Milan), Ballack (Bayern Munich), Del Piero (Juventus); C Lucarelli (Livorno), Forlan (Villarreal)

WORLD SOCCER (UK)
Dudek (Liverpool); Carragher (Liverpool), Sergio Ramos (Sevilla), Maldini (Milan); Lampard (Chelsea), Gerrard (Liverpool), Kaka (Milan), Daniel Carvalho (CSKA Moscow); Vagner Love (CSKA Moscow), Eto'o (Barcelona), Gilardino (Parma)

SCOTLAND – CHAMPIONSHIP POOL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	38	29	6	3	78	22	93
Celtic	38	30	2	6	85	35	92
Hibernian	38	18	7	13	64	57	61
Aberdeen	38	18	7	13	44	39	61
Hearts	38	13	11	14	43	41	50
Motherwell	38	13	9	16	46	49	48

RELEGATION POOL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kilmarnock	38	15	4	19	49	55	49
Inverness	38	11	11	16	41	47	44
Dundee Utd	38	8	12	18	41	59	36
Livingston	38	9	8	21	34	61	35
Dunfermline	38	8	10	20	34	60	34
Dundee	38	8	9	21	37	71	33

Relegated: Dundee
Promoted: Falkirk

Division split into championship and relegation pools after 33 rounds. All points and goals carried forward. Final five games played against teams in own pool

TOP GOALSCORERS
25 John Hartson (Celtic)
20 Derek Riordan (Hibernian)
19 Nacho Novo (Rangers)

SCOTTISH CUP – Final

May 28 - Hampden Park, Glasgow
Celtic 1 (Thompson 11)
Dundee Utd 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 50,635. **Ref:** Rowbotham

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

May 7: Obilic 3 Borac 2; Buducnost P 0 Zeleznik 0; Radnicki NB 0 Red Star 1; Smederevo 3 OFK 0; Hajduk K 2 Vojvodina 0; Partizan 3 Zemun 1; Sutjeska 0 Zeta 2; Cukaricki 5 Hajduk B 0.
May 11: Obilic 3 Zeta 1.
May 14: Borac 1 Cukaricki 1; Hajduk B 3 Sutjeska 2; Zeta 1 Partizan 1; Zemun 1 Hajduk K 0; Zeleznik 4 Obilic 3; OFK 3 Radnicki NB 2; Red Star 1 Buducnost P 2; Vojvodina 2 Smederevo 0.
May 21: Zeleznik 3 Borac 1; Obilic 0 Red Star 1; Buducnost P 1 OFK 0; Radnicki NB 1 Vojvodina 1; Smederevo 1 Zemun 0; Hajduk K 3 Zeta 2; Partizan 7 Hajduk B 0; Sutjeska 1 Cukaricki 2.
May 28: Borac 5 Sutjeska 2; Cukaricki 2 Partizan 2; Hajduk B 2 Hajduk K 3; Zeta 2 Smederevo 2; Zemun 3 Radnicki NB 1; Vojvodina 2 Buducnost P 1; OFK 2 Obilic 1; Red Star 3 Zeleznik 1.

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	30	25	5	0	81	20	80
Red Star	30	23	5	2	66	18	74
Zeta	30	18	5	7	52	30	59
OFK	30	16	2	12	51	36	50
Zemun	30	12	7	11	31	34	43
Buducnost P	30	12	5	13	37	37	41
Hajduk K	30	10	9	11	34	37	39
Vojvodina	30	10	8	12	31	37	38
Zeleznik	30	11	5	14	38	45	38
Smederevo	30	9	10	11	28	36	37
Obilic	30	10	6	14	35	47	36
Radnicki NB	30	10	5	15	33	38	35
Borac	30	9	7	14	34	44	34
Cukaricki	30	8	8	14	32	41	32
Sutjeska	30	5	7	18	21	48	22
Hajduk B	30	2	6	22	20	76	12

Relegated: Borac, Cukaricki, Sutjestka, Hajduk Belgrade
Promoted: Buducnost Banatski Dvor, Javor, Jedinstvo Bijelo Polje, plus one other

SERBO-MONTENEGRIN CUP – Final

May 24 - Partizan stadium, Belgrade
Red Star 0
Zeleznik 1 (Radjenovic 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 7,000. **Ref:** Stojanovic
Sent off: Djuraskovic (Zeleznik) 78min

SLOVAKIA

SLOVAKIAN CUP – Final

May 8 - Nitra
Banska Bystrica 2 (Pecovsky 5, Jakubko 24)
Artmedia Petrzalka 1 (Soltis 65)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 2,474. **Ref:** Michel

SLOVENIA

SLOVENIA – CHAMPIONSHIP POOL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gorica	32	18	11	3	49	23	65
Domzale	32	14	10	8	48	36	52
Publikum	32	16	4	12	47	28	52
Primorje	32	12	10	10	37	30	46
Drava	32	12	10	10	40	36	46
Olimpija	32	10	7	15	34	52	37

RELEGATION POOL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maribor	32	15	6	11	47	36	51
Mura	32	11	11	10	43	38	44
Ljubljana	32	10	12	10	38	43	42
Bela Krajina	32	9	10	13	31	44	37
Koper	32	9	9	14	38	41	36
Zagorje	32	2	8	22	17	62	14

Relegated: Olimpija (for financial reasons), Zagorje (Koper are in relegation/promotion play-off)
Promoted: Rudar Velenje

Division split into championship and relegation pools after 22 rounds. All points and goals carried forward. Final 10 games played against teams in own pool

SLOVENIAN CUP – Final

May 17 - Arena Petrol, Celje
Publikum 1 (Lungu og 74)
Gorica 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,500. **Ref:** Kos

SPAIN

Saturday, May 7
Athletic Bilbao 2 (Urzaiz 54, Lacruz 83)
Zaragoza 0 Att: 38,000

Betis 1 (Ricardo Oliveira 7)
Sevilla 0 Att: 40,000

Osasuna 1 (Milosevic 83)
Mallorca 1 (Farinos 33) Att: 13,194

Real Madrid 5 (Owen 29, Ronaldo pen 36, 90, Raul 54, 72)
Racing Santander 0 Att: 78,000

Sunday, May 8
Albacete 3 (Francisco 38, Redondo 50, M Gonzalez 53)
Levante 1 (Sergio Garcia 59) Att: 8,700

Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Luccin og 54, Capdevila 82)
Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 12,000

Espanyol 3 (Amavisca 55, Corominas 57, Antonio og 83)
Numancia 0 Att: 19,945

Getafe 2 (Michel 30, 40)
Real Sociedad 0 Att: 14,000

Malaga 0
Villarreal 2 (Riquelme 62, Santi Cazorla 65) Att: 20,000

Valencia 0
Barcelona 2 (Ronaldinho 28, Eto'o 30) Att: 55,000

Saturday, May 14
Levante 1 (Rivera 34)
Barcelona 1 (Eto'o 59) Att: 25,000

Sevilla 2 (Sergio Ramos 19, Julio Baptista 89)
Real Madrid 2 (Javi Navarro og 41, Zidane 74) Att: 45,000

Sunday, May 15
Atletico Madrid 1 (Melli og 53)
Betis 2 (Ricardo Oliveira 16, pen 38) Att: 15,000

Espanyol 2 (Tamudo pen 32, Velamazan 90)
Valencia 2 (Rufete 19, David Garcia og 67) Att: 35,150

Mallorca 4 (Farinos pen 10, Victor 48, 62, Okubo 51)
Athletic Bilbao 3 (Llorente 27, Gurpegi 30, Orbaiz 58) Att: 18,000

Numancia 2 (Miguel Perez 18, Miguel 71)
Osasuna 2 (Ortiz 12, Aloisi 16) Att: 7,000

Racing Santander 2 (Ayoze 17, Arizmendi 36)
Getafe 1 (Vivar Dorado 54) Att: 12,955

Real Sociedad 1 (Aguirretxe 82)
Malaga 3 (Edgar 44, Fernando Baiano 55, 66) Att: 16,000

Villarreal 1 (Riquelme pen 67)
Albacete 0 Att: 21,000

Zaragoza 2 (Generelo 58, 66)
Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Xisco 27, 38) Att: 32,000

Saturday, May 21
Betis 3 (Juanito 59, Ricardo Oliveira 69, Fernando 82)
Zaragoza 2 (Savio 36, Oscar 90) Att: 35,000

Real Madrid 0
Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 75,000

Sunday, May 22
Albacete 2 (Pacheco 9, 32)
Real Sociedad 2 (De Paula 82, Uranga 90) Att: 5,000

Athletic Bilbao 0
Numancia 2 (Merino 8, Tevenet pen 89) Att: 35,000

Barcelona 3 (Ronaldinho 34, Giuly 37, 48)
Villarreal 3 (Forlan 17, pen 30, 70) Att: 84,537

Deportivo La Coruna 0
Mallorca 3 (Farinos 9, Arango 36, Okubo 62) Att: 26,000

Getafe 0
Sevilla 0 Att: 14,500

Levante 0
Valencia 0 Att: 19,545

Malaga 2 (Edgar 18, Amoroso 90)
Racing Santander 0 Att: 15,000

Osasuna 1 (Lopo og 22)
Espanyol 1 (Maxi Rodriguez 3) Att: 14,840

Saturday, May 28
Real Sociedad 0
Barcelona 0 Att: 25,861

Zaragoza 1 (Oscar 44)
Real Madrid 3 (Owen 23, Roberto Carlos 53, Ronaldo 90) Att: 27,000

Sunday, May 29
Atletico Madrid 2 (Nunez 46, 90)
Getafe 2 (Cubillo pen 22, Craioveanu 55) Att: 45,000

Espanyol 2 (Velamazan 35, Lopo 46)
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 41,850

Mallorca 1 (Pereyra 89)
Betis 1 (Marcos Assuncao 53) Att: 23,000

Numancia 1 (Tevenet pen 48)
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Juanpa 59) Att: 7,000

Racing Santander 1 (Aganzo 33)
Albacete 0 Att: 9,153

Sevilla 0
Malaga 2 (Duda 75, Fernando Baiano 90) Att: 45,000

Valencia 1 (Aimar 81)
Osasuna 0 Att: 30,000

Villarreal 4 (Josico 40, Forlan 45, 90, Figueroa 90)
Levante 1 (Reggi 22) Att: 22,000

SPAIN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	38	25	9	4	73	29	84
Real Madrid	38	25	5	8	71	32	80
Villarreal	38	18	11	9	69	37	65
Betis	38	16	14	8	62	50	62
Espanyol	38	17	10	11	54	46	61
Sevilla	38	17	9	12	44	41	60
Valencia	38	14	16	8	54	39	58
Dep La Coruna	38	12	15	11	46	50	51
Athletic Bilbao	38	14	9	15	59	54	51
Malaga	38	15	6	17	40	48	51
Zaragoza	38	14	8	16	52	57	50
Atletico Madrid	38	13	11	14	40	34	50
Getafe	38	12	11	15	38	46	47
Real Sociedad	38	13	8	17	47	56	47
Osasuna	38	12	10	16	46	65	46
R Santander	38	12	8	18	41	58	44
Mallorca	38	10	9	19	42	63	39
Levante	38	9	10	19	39	58	37
Numancia	38	6	11	21	30	61	29
Albacete	38	6	10	22	33	56	28

Relegated: Levante, Numancia, Albacete
Promoted: Celta Vigo, plus two others

TOP GOALSCORERS
25 Diego Forlan (Villarreal)
24 Samuel Eto'o (Barcelona)
22 Ricardo Oliveira (Betis)
21 Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
18 Julio Baptista (Sevilla)

SPANISH CUP – semi-finals, 2nd legs

May 11: Athletic Bilbao 0 Betis 0
Agg 0-0. Betis 5-4 on pens.
May 12: Atletico Madrid 0 Osasuna 0
Osasuna 1-0 on agg.

SWEDEN

May 8: Assyriska 0 Malmo 2; Elfsborg 1 Landskrona 2; Orgryte 0 Hacken 4.
May 9: Helsingborgs 2 Hammarby 1; Djurgardens 3 Gefle 1; Kalmar 0 IFK Gothenburg 0.
May 10: Sundsvall 1 Halmstads 3.
May 15: Hacken 2 Elfsborg 2; Landskrona 2 Assyriska 1; Halmstads 4 Orgryte 2.
May 16: Gefle 2 Sundsvall 1; IFK Gothenburg 0 Helsingborgs 0; Malmo 1 Kalmar 0.
May 18: Hammarby 2 Djurgardens 1.
May 22: Hacken 2 Gefle 1; Sundsvall 2 Malmo 0; Helsingborgs 2 Kalmar 2.
May 23: Elfsborg 4 Hammarby 1; Djurgardens 3 Assyriska 1; Halmstads 5 Landskrona 1.
May 24: IFK Gothenburg 3 Orgryte 0.
May 29: Assyriska 1 Sundsvall 0; Kalmar 0 Djurgardens 2; Malmo 1 Orgryte 0; Gefle 2 Halmstads 0.
May 30: Landskrona 4 Helsingborgs 3; IFK Gothenburg 1 Elfsborg 1; Hammarby 3 Hacken 1.

SWEDEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Djurgardens	8	5	1	2	16	11	16
Malmo	8	5	1	2	10	5	16
Helsingborgs	8	4	2	2	14	11	14
Halmstads	8	4	1	3	15	10	13
Hacken	8	4	1	3	14	10	13
IFK Gothenburg	8	3	4	1	8	6	13
Kalmar	8	3	3	2	6	5	12
Hammarby	8	3	2	3	10	11	11
Landskrona	8	3	2	3	13	16	11
Gefle	8	3	0	5	8	12	9
Elfsborg	8	2	2	4	11	14	8
Assyriska	8	2	1	5	7	10	7
Sundsvall	8	2	1	5	10	14	7
Orgryte	8	2	1	5	10	17	7

SWITZERLAND

May 7: Basle 4 Thun 1; St Gallen 1 Schaffhausen 1.
May 8: Young Boys 1 Zurich 1.
May 11: Neuchatel Xamax 1 Aarau 1; Schaffhausen 2 Zurich 1; Thun 1 Young Boys 1; Basle 3 St Gallen 1.
May 14: Neuchatel Xamax 0 Thun 0.
May 18: St Gallen 5 Neuchatel Xamax 0; Young Boys 3 Grasshopper 2; Aarau 0 Schaffhausen 1.
May 19: Zurich 6 Thun 3.
May 21: Grasshopper 4 Basle 1.
May 22: Neuchatel Xamax 1 Zurich 2; Aarau 1 Young Boys 1; Thun 3 St Gallen 1.
May 25: Neuchatel Xamax 1 Grasshopper 2.
May 28: Basle 2 Neuchatel Xamax 0.
May 29: Zurich 2 Aarau 0; St Gallen 3 Grasshopper 3; Young Boys 4 Schaffhausen 1.

SWITZERLAND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basle	34	21	7	6	81	45	70
Thun	34	18	6	10	69	42	60
Grasshopper	34	12	14	8	51	50	50
Young Boys	34	12	13	9	60	52	49
Zurich	34	13	9	12	55	57	48
Neuchatel X	34	10	8	16	36	48	38
St Gallen	34	8	12	14	51	60	36
Aarau	34	7	11	16	42	64	32
Schaffhausen	34	7	11	16	36	59	32
Servette*	18	6	5	7	24	28	20

**Servette did not play after winter break having gone bankrupt. They had earlier had 3pts deducted for licensing irregularities during the 2003-04 season*

Relegated: Servette (Schaffhausen are in relegation/promotion play-off)
Promoted: Yverdon

SWISS CUP – Final

May 16 - St Jakob-Park, Basle
Lucerne 1 (Andreoli 87)
Zurich 3 (Schneider 39, Keita 62, Tararache 74)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 32,500. **Ref:** Busacca

TURKEY

May 7: Galatasaray 2 Ankaragucu 1; Trabzonspor 4 Konyaspor 2; Diyarbakirspor 0 Fenerbahce 2; Gaziantepspor 1 Kayserispor 2; Ankaraspor 1 Rizespor 0; Sakaryaspor 1 Istanbulspor 3.
May 8: Besiktas 2 Samsunspor 0; Denizlispor 4 Sebatspor 2; Genclerbirligi 5 Malatyaspor 3.
May 14: Samsunspor 0 Ankaraspor 0; Sebatspor 2 Gaziantepspor 0; Malatyaspor 2 Denizlispor 2.
May 15: Kayserispor 1 Sakaryaspor 0; Galatasaray 1 Genclerbirligi 2; Konyaspor 2 Diyarbakirspor 1; Istanbulspor 1 Besiktas 1; Ankaragucu 1 Fenerbahce 0; Rizespor 1 Trabzonspor 2.
May 21: Ankaragucu 1 Konyaspor 1; Ankaraspor 3 Istanbulspor 2; Besiktas 3 Kayserispor 2; Diyarbakirspor 1 Rizespor 1; Gaziantepspor 4 Malatyaspor 3; Sakaryaspor 4 Sebatspor 2.
May 22: Denizlispor 1 Genclerbirligi 1; Fenerbahce 1 Galatasaray 0; Trabzonspor 3 Samsunspor 0.
May 27: Konyaspor 4 Fenerbahce 2.
May 28: Genclerbirligi 2 Gaziantepspor 1; Kayserispor 0 Ankaraspor 0; Malatyaspor 4 Sakaryaspor 2; Rizespor 1 Ankaragucu 2; Samsunspor 0 Diyarbakirspor 1; Sebatspor 2 Besiktas 2; Galatasaray 4 Denizlispor 0; Istanbulspor 0 Trabzonspor 5.

TURKEY – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	34	26	2	6	77	24	80
Trabzonspor	34	24	5	5	73	29	77
Galatasaray	34	24	4	6	64	25	76
Besiktas	34	20	9	5	70	39	69
Genclerbirligi	34	14	9	11	52	41	51
Denizlispor	34	13	10	11	46	45	49
Ankaraspor	34	13	9	12	52	48	48
Konyaspor	34	11	12	11	62	62	45
Gaziantepspor	34	13	5	16	49	55	44
Rizespor	34	11	10	13	36	37	43
Malatyaspor	34	12	7	15	47	53	43
Samsunspor	34	10	8	16	40	55	38
Ankaragucu	34	10	8	16	37	61	38
Kayserispor	34	8	10	16	42	65	34
Diyarbakirspor	34	9	7	18	31	53	34
Sakaryaspor	34	9	5	20	51	72	32
Istanbulspor	34	5	12	17	32	59	27
Sebatspor	34	3	10	21	40	78	19

Relegated: Sakaryaspor, Istanbulspor, Sebatspor
Promoted: Sivasspor, Vestel Manisaspor, Kayseri Erciyesspor

TURKISH CUP – Final

May 11 - Ataturk Olympic stadium, Istanbul
Galatasaray 5 (Ribery 16, Necati 25, Deniz og 38, Hakan Sukur 71, 88)
Fenerbahce 1 (Fabio Luciano 41)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Tatli

UKRAINE

May 7: Arsenal 0 Metalist 0.
May 8: Metalurh Z 2 Kryvbas 0; Vorskla 2 Zakarpattya 0; Borysfen 0 Shakhtar 2; Obolon 0 Tavriya 1; Chornomorets 0 Dynamo 3; Metalurh D 1 Volyn 0; Dnipro 2 Illichivets 0.
May 12: Zakarpattya 0 Shakhtar 0; Dnipro 1 Metalurh Z 1.
May 15: Tavriya 0 Dynamo 1; Kryvbas 1 Borysfen 1; Illichivets 2 Chornomorets 1; Obolon 2 Arsenal 1.
May 16: Zakarpattya 1 Metalurh D 1; Metalist 0 Metalurh Z 0; Volyn 1 Dnipro 1; Shakhtar 1 Vorskla 0.
May 21: Metalurh Z 1 Obolon 0; Vorskla 2 Kryvbas 1; Borysfen 0 Metalist 1; Chornomorets 2 Volyn 1; Metalurh D 1 Shakhtar 3; Dnipro 0 Zakarpattya 3; Dynamo 2 Illichivets 0.
May 22: Arsenal 2 Tavriya 2.
May 25: Volyn 0 Dynamo 1; Shakhtar 2 Dnipro 0.
May 27: Arsenal 1 Metalurh Z 0.
May 28: Zakarpattya 2 Chornomorets 0; Metalist 1 Vorskla 1; Tavriya 2 Illichivets 0; Kryvbas 1 Metalurh D 0; Obolon 0 Borysfen 0.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	28	24	2	2	57	16	74
Dynamo	28	22	4	2	53	11	70
Metalurh D	28	13	6	9	34	33	45
Dnipro	28	11	9	8	34	33	42
Chornomorets	28	12	5	11	28	26	41
Illichivets	28	11	8	9	37	33	41
Volyn	28	11	7	10	34	32	40
Tavriya	28	9	9	10	28	26	36
Metalist	28	9	7	12	24	32	34
Metalurh Z	28	7	11	10	22	29	32
Arsenal	28	7	10	11	27	33	31
Kryvbas	28	7	9	12	23	36	30
Zakarpattya	28	6	10	12	20	27	28
Vorskla	28	7	6	15	16	32	27
Obolon	28	4	8	16	16	40	20
Borysfen	28	3	11	14	14	28	20

UKRAINIAN CUP – Final

May 29 - Kiev
Dynamo 1 (Diogo Rincon pen 11)
Shakhtar 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 68,000. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Sent off: Marica (Shakhtar) 19min

WALES

WALES – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
TNS	34	23	9	2	83	25	78
Rhyl	34	23	5	6	70	31	74
Bangor	34	20	7	7	73	44	67
Haverfordwest	34	17	12	5	50	28	63
Caersws	34	19	5	10	67	39	62
Carmarthen	34	17	10	7	60	34	61
Cwmbran	34	15	8	11	52	47	53
Aberystwyth	34	15	8	11	45	40	53
Welshpool	34	14	9	11	55	46	51
Newtown	34	13	7	14	49	55	46
Porthmadog	34	11	12	11	38	39	45
Connah's Quay	34	9	9	16	48	58	36
Port Talbot	34	6	11	17	36	49	29
Llanelli	34	8	5	21	42	85	29
Caernarfon	34	7	7	20	29	72	28
Airbus UK	34	5	9	20	36	76	24
N Cefn Druids	34	5	7	22	30	72	22
Afan Lido*	34	6	6	22	29	52	21

**3pts deducted for fielding ineligible player*

Relegated: Afan Lido
Promoted: Grange Harlequins

WELSH CUP – Final

May 8 - Stebonheath Park, Llanelli
Carmarthen 0
Total Network Solutions 1 (Lawless 75)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,126. **Ref:** S Jones

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Group 1

May 10 - Curitiba
Atletico Paranaense (Bra) 0
Independiente Medellin (Col) 4 (Valoyes 63, 74, Serna 82, Montoya pen 86)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pezzotta (Arg)

May 10 - Cali
America (Col) 0
Libertad (Par) 1 (Devaca 41)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Reinoso (Ecu)

GROUP 1 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Indep Medellin	6	3	1	2	14	8	10
At Paranaense	6	3	1	2	8	11	10
America	6	3	0	3	7	7	9
Libertad	6	2	0	4	8	11	6

Group 2

May 11 - Santos
Santos (Bra) 6 (Bovio 3, Avalos 14, Paulo Cesar 43, Ricardinho 59, Basilio 71, Deivid 76)
Bolivar (Bol) 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)

May 11 - Quito
LDU Quito (Ecu) 1 (Mendez 77)
Danubio (Uru) 1 (Risso 33)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)

GROUP 2 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos	6	4	0	2	18	10	12
LDU Quito	6	2	2	2	7	10	8
Danubio	6	2	1	3	9	8	7
Bolivar	6	2	1	3	8	14	7

Group 3

May 11 - Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo (Bra) 3 (Edcarlos 35, Luizao 38, Grafite 54)
The Strongest (Bol) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Elizondo (Arg)

May 11 - Buenos Aires
Quilmes (Arg) 1 (Rueda 52)
Universidad de Chile (Chl) 1 (Iturra 24)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Morales (Per)

GROUP 3 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sao Paulo	6	3	3	0	16	9	12
U de Chile	6	2	3	1	9	9	9
Quilmes	6	1	2	3	8	11	5
The Strongest	6	1	2	3	6	10	5

Group 4

May 12 - Santo Andre
Santo Andre (Bra) 6 (Sandro Gaucho 37, Rodrigao 53, 63, Romerito 59, Leandrinho 60, Richarlyson 88)
Deportivo Tachira (Ven) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
Sent off: Lucena (Tachira) 39min

May 12 - Sao Paulo
Palmeiras (Bra) 0
Cerro Porteno (Par) 0
Ref: Gimenez (Arg)
Sent off: Nen (Palmeiras) 65min

GROUP 4 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cerro Porteno	6	3	3	0	10	4	12
Palmeiras	6	2	3	1	8	5	9
Santo Andre	6	2	2	2	11	6	8
Dep Tachira	6	1	0	5	3	17	3

Group 5

GROUP 5 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
River Plate (Arg)	6	5	1	0	12	5	16
At Junior (Col)	6	3	0	3	8	9	9
Olmedo (Ecu)	6	2	1	3	10	11	7
Nacional (Uru)	6	1	0	5	7	12	3

Group 6

GROUP 6 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tigres (Mex)	6	3	3	0	13	5	12
Banfield (Arg)	6	3	2	1	10	9	11
Alianza (Per)	6	1	2	3	4	7	5
Caracas (Ven)	6	1	1	4	8	14	4

Group 7

GROUP 7 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guad'jara (Mex)	6	3	2	1	10	7	11
O Caldas (Col)	6	2	3	1	6	4	9
Cobreloa (Chl)	6	2	2	2	6	7	8
S Lorenzo (Arg)	6	0	3	3	1	5	3

Group 8

GROUP 8 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boca Jnrs (Arg)	6	4	1	1	14	3	13
Pachuca (Mex)	6	3	1	2	8	9	10
Sp Cristal (Per)	6	2	1	3	5	10	7
Cuenca (Ecu)	6	0	3	3	4	9	3

Top two from each group qualified for knockout stages

1st knockout rnd, 1st legs

May 17 - Barranquilla
Atletico Junior 3 (O Perez 11, Arzuaga 14, Acuna 37)
Boca Juniors 3 (Schiavi 8, Palacio 60, Delgado 90)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Selman (Chl)

May 17 - Quito
LDU Quito 2 (Urrutia pen 35, 73)
River Plate 1 (Patino 41)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)

May 18 - Buenos Aires
Banfield 3 (Bilos 59, 69, Ceballos 72)
Independiente Medellin 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Sent off: Benitez 71min, Ramos 90min (both Independiente)

May 18 - Pachuca
Pachuca 1 (Borgetti 27)
Guadalajara 1 (Palencia 48)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)

May 18 - Sao Paulo
Palmeiras 0
Sao Paulo 1 (Cicinho 60)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Fagundes (Bra)

May 19 - Curitiba
Atletico Paranaense 2 (Lima 30, Cleo 51)
Cerro Porteno 1 (Dos Santos 48)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Brazenas (Arg)

May 19 - Manizales
Once Caldas 1 (Alvarez 83)
Tigres 1 (Gaitan 35)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Pezzotta (Arg)

May 19 - Santiago
Universidad de Chile 2 (Rivarola 51, Galaz 73)
Santos 1 (Ricardinho 57)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)

1st knockout rnd, 2nd legs

May 24 - Guadalajara
Guadalajara 3 (Alfaro 35, Vela 51, R Medina 58)
Pachuca 1 (Santana 16)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Alcala (Mex)
Sent off: Hurtado (Pachuca) 57min
Guadalajara 4-2 on agg

May 24 - Medellin
Independiente Medellin 0
Banfield 2 (Barijho 51, Paletta 70)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Souza Mendonca (Bra)
Banfield 5-0 on agg

May 25 - Santos
Santos 3 (Flavio 34, Robinho 72, pen 89)
Universidad de Chile 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Elizondo (Arg)
Santos 4-2 on agg

May 25 - Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo 2 (Rogerio Ceni pen 82, Cicinho 90)
Palmeiras 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Spinola (Bra)
Sent off: Josue (Sao Paulo) 55min
Sao Paulo 3-0 on agg

May 26 - Buenos Aires
Boca Juniors 4 (Guglielminpietro 1, 55, Palermo 39, 71)
Atletico Junior 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)
Boca 7-3 on agg

May 26 - Asuncion
Cerro Porteno 2 (Dos Santos 7, S Salcedo 39)
Atletico Paranaense 1 (Lima 10)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
Agg 3-3. Atletico Paranaense 5-4 on pens

May 26 - Buenos Aires
River Plate 4 (Salas 7, 11, Espinola og 50, Gonzalez 60)
LDU Quito 2 (Palacios 46, Espinola 66)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Sent off: Ambrossi (LDU Quito) 78min
River Plate 5-4 on agg

May 26 - Monterrey
Tigres 2 (De Nigris 53, Saavedra 65)
Once Caldas 1 (Fabbro 35)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Mendez (Uru)
Sent off: Diaz (Once Caldas) 83min
Tigres 3-2 on agg

Quarter-finals, 1st legs

June 1 - Curitiba
Atletico Paranaense 3 (Evandro 26, Marcao 41, Lima 71)
Santos 2 (Ricardinho 13, Deivid 44)
HT: 2-2. **Ref:** Souza Mendonca (Bra)
Sent off: Alan Bahia (Paranaense) 27min

June 1 - Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo 4 (Rogerio Ceni 31, 59, Luizao 40, Souza 61)
Tigres 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Gimenez (Arg)
Sent off: Da Silva (Tigres) 57min

June 2 - Buenos Aires
Banfield 1 (Bilos 56)
River Plate 1 (Gallardo 10)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Elizondo (Arg)

June 2 - Guadalajara
Guadalajara 4 (J Garcia 45, Bravo 55, Alfaro 61, Bautista 67)
Boca Juniors 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Torres (Par)

2nd legs - June 14/15/16

Semi-finals
1st legs - June 22; 2nd legs - June 29

Final
1st leg - July 6; 2nd leg - July 13

ARGENTINA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Friday, May 6
Independiente 2 (Eluchans 25, Frutos 64)
Colon Santa Fe 3 (Fuertes 15, 46, Vargas 17)

Saturday, May 7
Quilmes 2 (Alayes 6, Benitez 45)
Newell's Old Boys 0

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Pellegrino 11, Bravo 84)
Huracan 0

Sunday, May 8
Almagro 1 (Gonzalez pen 32)
Arsenal 2 (Calderon 8, 10)

Boca Juniors 1 (Palermo pen 50)
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Carrario 56, Oberman 59)

Gimnasia LP 0
Banfield 2 (Paletta 30, 60)

Lanus 0
Estudiantes 0

Olimpo 1 (Delorte 24)
Instituto 1 (Moreyra 79)

Rosario Central 0
Racing Club 2 (Lopez 6, Simeone 66)

San Lorenzo 3 (Herrera 22, Zabaleta 81, Coudet 89)
River Plate 1 (Zapata 8)

Friday, May 13
Estudiantes 0
San Lorenzo 1 (Santana 52)

Saturday, May 14
Banfield 1 (Frutos og 78)
Independiente 1 (Pusineri 64)

Colon Santa Fe 1 (Gandin 19)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Bravo 8)

Sunday, May 15
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Oberman 38)
Gimnasia LP 2 (Licht 24, San Esteban 31)

Arsenal 2 (Calderon 18, Romero og 39)
Lanus 2 (Romero 52, Diaz 77)

Huracan 2 (Vannieuwenhoven 47, Caggiano 72)
Rosario Central 2 (Diaz 45, Villa 46)

Instituto 3 (Lujambio 28, 39, Peralta 30)
Boca Juniors 1 (Cardozo 36)

Newell's Old Boys 2 (Borghello 28, Ceresetto 83)
Almagro 1 (Sparapani 17)

Racing Club 2 (Barrado 25, Lopez 63)
Quilmes 1 (Caneo 71)

River Plate 0
Olimpo 2 (Galvan pen 45, 63)

Friday, May 20
Lanus 0
Newell's Old Boys 0

San Lorenzo 1 (Herrera 45)
Arsenal 2 (Esmerado 27, 90)

Saturday, May 21
Huracan 0
Racing Club 0

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Castroman 68, Zarate 90)
Banfield 0

Sunday, May 22
Almagro 2 (Figueroa 49, Gonzalez pen 78)
Quilmes 0

Boca Juniors 2 (Barros Schelotto 13, Delgado 81)
River Plate 1 (Gonzalez 46)

Gimnasia LP 0
Instituto 0

Independiente 3 (Aguero 47, 62, Insua 84)
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Carrario 31, 59)

Olimpo 0
Estudiantes 2 (Krupoviesa 46, Ortiz 52)

Rosario Central 0
Colon Santa Fe 0

Friday, May 27
Instituto 0
Independiente 0

Saturday, May 28
Arsenal 3 (Llama 11, 16, Calderon 25)
Olimpo 0

Banfield 3 (Piriz Alvez 4, Azconzabal 20, Armenteros 27)
Rosario Central 0

Newell's Old Boys 1 (Vella 61)
San Lorenzo 1 (Barrientos 18)

Sunday, May 29
Argentinos Juniors 0
Velez Sarsfield 3 (Castroman pen 2, Pellegrino 65, Gracian 84)

Colon Santa Fe 3 (Fuertes 27, pen 32, 57)
Huracan 0

Estudiantes 0
Boca Juniors 0

Quilmes 0
Lanus 0

Racing Club 1 (Lopez 24)
Almagro 1 (Castano 90)

River Plate 1 (Almenares 10)
Gimnasia LP 2 (San Esteban 30, Vargas 72)

ARGENTINA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Velez Sarsfield	15	9	5	1	25	10	32
Estudiantes	15	8	5	2	24	13	29
Racing Club	15	8	4	3	21	13	28
Arsenal	15	7	5	3	20	14	26
Colon Santa Fe	15	6	5	4	25	16	23
River Plate	15	7	2	6	29	24	23
Banfield	15	7	2	6	20	15	23
Rosario Central	15	6	5	4	20	21	23
Lanus	15	5	7	3	24	22	22
Boca Juniors	15	6	3	6	23	23	21
Newell's OB	15	4	8	3	20	18	20
Independiente	15	5	5	5	21	20	20
Olimpo	15	5	4	6	15	16	19
Instituto	15	5	4	6	22	25	19
Gimnasia LP	15	6	1	8	17	22	19
Quilmes	15	5	2	8	14	19	17
Argentinos Jnrs	15	4	4	7	18	23	16
San Lorenzo	15	3	4	8	16	25	13
Almagro	15	2	4	9	19	34	10
Huracan	15	0	5	10	10	30	5

LEADING GOALSCORERS
14 Mariano Pavone (Estudiantes)
8 Esteban Fuertes (Colon Santa Fe)
8 Josemir Lujambio (Instituto)

BOLIVIA

TRANSITIONAL TOURNAMENT

May 7: The Strongest 3 Iberoamericana 1; Destroyers 1 Real Potosi 0.
May 8: La Paz 1 Bolivar 3; Aurora 3 Blooming 1; Oriente 0 Jorge Wilstermann 3.
May 14: San Jose 6 Aurora 0.
May 15: Iberoamericana 0 La Paz 1; Real Potosi 6 Union Central 0; Jorge Wilstermann 2 Destroyers 0; Bolivar 3 Oriente 0; Blooming 1 The Strongest 0.
May 22: Iberoamericana 0 Oriente 0; San Jose 1 The Strongest 1; Union Central 2 Aurora 1; Bolivar 6 Destroyers 1; Blooming 1 La Paz 0; Real Potosi 1 Jorge Wilstermann 0.
May 28: Real Potosi 1 Aurora 0.
May 29: La Paz 2 San Jose 1; Jorge Wilstermann 0 Bolivar 3; Oriente 4 Blooming 2.
May 30: Destroyers 2 Iberoamericana 0.

BOLIVIA – TRANSITIONAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolivar	13	8	4	1	33	8	28
J Wilstermann	12	7	1	4	19	11	22
The Strongest	12	6	3	3	19	9	21
Oriente	13	6	3	4	20	19	21
San Jose	12	5	5	2	34	18	20
La Paz	13	6	1	6	22	19	19
Aurora	13	5	4	4	19	17	19
Blooming	13	6	1	6	19	26	19
Real Potosi	12	5	3	4	17	18	18
Destroyers	13	3	1	9	16	38	10
Union Central	11	3	0	8	11	26	9
Iberoamericana	13	1	2	10	8	28	5

BRAZIL

May 7: Santos 2 Atletico Paranaense 1; Goias 0 Figueirense 0; Parana 2 Juventude 2; Ponte Preta 2 Paysandu 0.
May 8: Internacional 1 Flamengo 0; Sao Caetano 2 Fortaleza 1; Vasco da Gama 0 Botafogo 1; Coritiba 1 Palmeiras 0; Fluminense 2 Cruzeiro 1; Atletico Mineiro 0 Brasiliense 1; Corinthians 1 Sao Paulo 5.
May 14: Fortaleza 2 Ponte Preta 1; Figueirense 1 Internacional 2; Sao Paulo 1 Coritiba 0; Botafogo 2 Atletico Mineiro 1.
May 15: Juventude 4 Vasco da Gama 1; Paysandu 3 Sao Caetano 2; Flamengo 2 Santos 1; Atletico Paranaense 1 Corinthians 2; Cruzeiro 3 Goias 1; Palmeiras 1 Parana 2; Brasiliense 0 Fluminense 3.
May 21: Juventude 2 Paysandu 0; Parana 1 Ponte Preta 1; Fortaleza 2 Brasiliense 0; Fluminense 2 Coritiba 4; Goias 4 Botafogo 0.
May 22: Santos 3 Atletico Mineiro 0; Sao Caetano 1 Flamengo 0; Vasco da Gama 3 Sao Paulo 1; Atletico Paranaense 1 Internacional 3; Cruzeiro 2 Palmeiras 0; Corinthians 2 Figueirense 1.
May 28: Paysandu 1 Goias 0; Sao Paulo 1 Cruzeiro 1; Figueirense 2 Sao Caetano 0.
May 29: Internacional 1 Fortaleza 0; Ponte Preta 4 Vasco da Gama 2; Flamengo 0 Fluminense 0; Coritiba 1 Juventude 2; Botafogo 2 Atletico Paranaense 0; Atletico Mineiro 0 Corinthians 1; Palmeiras 2 Santos 1; Brasiliense 1 Parana 0.

BRAZIL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Botafogo	6	5	0	1	10	6	15
Juventude	6	4	2	0	13	6	14
Fluminense	6	4	1	1	11	7	13
Santos	6	4	0	2	14	8	12
Internacional	6	4	0	2	9	7	12
Ponte Preta	6	3	2	1	12	8	11
Cruzeiro	6	3	2	1	11	7	11
Corinthians	6	3	1	2	9	12	10
Coritiba	6	3	0	3	9	8	9
Goias	6	2	2	2	7	4	8
Sao Paulo	6	2	2	2	10	8	8
Flamengo	6	2	2	2	4	4	8
Sao Caetano	6	2	2	2	7	8	8
Fortaleza	6	2	1	3	5	5	7
Palmeiras	6	2	1	3	7	9	7
Vasco da Gama	6	2	1	3	7	10	7
Brasiliense	6	2	0	4	3	8	6
Paysandu	6	2	0	4	6	12	6
Parana	6	1	3	2	6	8	6
At Mineiro	6	1	1	4	8	11	4
Figueirense	6	1	1	4	5	9	4
At Paranaense	6	0	0	6	3	11	0

CHILE

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

May 6: Rangers 2 Cobresal 3.
May 7: U de Chile 3 Dep Temuco 2; Dep Concepcion 2 Colo Colo 0; Huachipato 3 Coquimbo Unido 2; Palestino 1 Everton 1; Dep La Serena 1 Dep Melipilla 0.
May 8: U Catolica 4 Cobreloa 1; Santiago Wanderers 3 U de Concepcion 0; Puerto Montt 2 Audax Italiano 2; San Felipe 2 Union Espanola 1.
May 13: Cobreloa 5 Dep La Serena 0.
May 14: Colo Colo 1 Huachipato 0; Cobresal 0 U Catolica 0; Coquimbo Unido 4 Puerto Montt 1.
May 15: U de Concepcion 0 U de Chile 3; Audax Italiano 1 Santiago Wanderers 1; Union Espanola 1 Dep Concepcion 2; Dep Temuco 1 Palestino 1; Everton 1 Rangers 3; Dep Melipilla 1 San Felipe 0.
May 21: Dep La Serena 2 Coquimbo Unido 2; U Catolica 1 Everton 2; Huachipato 2 Audax Italiano 0; Palestino 2 Union Espanola 3; Dep Melipilla 1 Cobresal 2.
May 22: Santiago Wanderers 1 Cobreloa 2; Dep Concepcion 1 U de Concepcion 2; Puerto Montt 1 Dep Temuco 1.
May 23: San Felipe 2 Colo Colo 3.
May 28: Cobresal 2 U de Chile 4; Colo Colo 2 Deportes Melipilla 2; Coquimbo Unido 3 Santiago Wanderers 1; Everton 3 Dep La Serena 1.
May 29: Cobreloa 4 Puerto Montt 3; U de Concepcion 0 Palestino 2; Rangers 1 U Catolica 3; Audax Italiano 1 San Felipe 1; Union Espanola 2 Huachipato 1; Dep Temuco 1 Dep Concepcion 1.
June 1: U de Chile 1 Rangers 2.

CHILE – OPENING – GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	19	9	5	5	34	24	32
Huachipato	19	10	1	8	31	28	31
San Felipe	19	5	3	11	16	26	18
Dep Melipilla	19	4	5	10	14	30	17
Audax Italiano	19	3	7	9	22	32	16

GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cobreloa	19	10	3	6	35	29	33
Coq'bo Unido	19	9	2	8	27	29	29
Dep La Serena	19	7	5	7	28	35	26
S Wanderers	19	7	2	10	28	30	23
Puerto Montt	19	5	3	11	30	36	18

GROUP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Union Espanola	19	7	5	7	32	31	26
Dep Concepcion	19	6	7	6	20	21	25
U Concepcion	19	6	4	9	23	31	22
Palestino	19	6	3	10	21	28	21
Dep Temuco	19	3	8	8	24	31	17

GROUP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U Catolica	19	14	2	3	39	13	44
U de Chile	19	12	3	4	36	19	39
Cobresal	19	9	5	5	32	25	32
Everton	19	8	6	5	32	27	30
Rangers	19	7	7	5	24	23	28

Group winners and the two runners-up with most points qualified for championship play-offs automatically; other two runners-up and the two teams with most points other than those mentioned went into qualifying play-offs

Qualifying play-offs

June 1: Coquimbo Unido 2 Everton 1; Dep Concepcion 4 Cobresal 3.

COLOMBIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP
Regular season

May 7: Envigado 2 Tolima 0; Chico 2 Bucaramanga 0; At Huila 2 Dep Cali 0; Millonarios 1 Magdalena 0; Pereira 1 At Nacional 1; Indep Medellin 1 Once Caldas 0; At Junior 1 Indep Santa Fe 1; America 1 Dep Pasto 0; Real Cartagena 1 Quindio 0.
May 11: Tolima 3 Quindio 0; Dep Pasto 1 Real Cartagena 1; Indep Santa Fe 2 America 5; Once Caldas 2 At Junior 1; At Nacional 3 Indep Medellin 1; Magdalena 1 Pereira 1; Dep Cali 4 Millonarios 2; Bucaramanga 2 At Huila 0; Envigado 1 Chico 2.
May 15: Chico 0 Tolima 0; At Huila 2 Envigado 1; Millonarios 1 Bucaramanga 1; Pereira 0 Dep Cali 2; Indep Medellin 5 Magdalena 0; America 1 Once Caldas 1; At Junior 2 At Nacional 0; Real Cartagena 0 Indep Santa Fe 2; Quindio 1 Dep Pasto 1.

COLOMBIA – OPENING – REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
At Nacional	18	10	6	2	36	20	36
Indep Santa Fe	18	7	7	4	20	16	28
Indep Medellin	18	8	3	7	22	23	27
Envigado	18	7	6	5	33	24	27
Dep Cali	18	7	6	5	24	18	27
At Huila	18	7	6	5	16	12	27
Tolima	18	6	9	3	21	14	27
Once Caldas	18	6	8	4	21	17	26
Dep Pasto	18	6	8	4	22	21	26
At Junior	18	7	4	7	26	23	25
Real Cartagena	18	7	3	8	18	20	24
America	18	6	6	6	24	26	24
Chico	18	6	4	8	18	19	22
Millonarios	18	4	9	5	25	33	21
Bucaramanga	18	5	5	8	14	18	20
Magdalena	18	4	4	10	11	22	16
Quindio	18	4	4	10	14	32	16
Pereira	18	2	8	8	15	22	14

Top eight qualified for championship play-offs

Play-offs

May 18: At Nacional 0 Dep Cali 0; Tolima 3 Indep Medellin 1; Indep Santa Fe 4 At Huila 2; Envigado 2 Once Caldas 1.
May 22: Dep Cali 0 Tolima 1; Indep Medellin 1 At Nacional 2; At Huila 2 Envigado 2; Once Caldas 0 Indep Santa Fe 1.
May 25: Dep Cali 1 Indep Medellin 2; At Huila 2 Once Caldas 2; Indep Santa Fe 0 Envigado 2.
May 26: At Nacional 4 Tolima 1.

PLAY-OFFS – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
At Nacional	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Tolima	3	2	0	1	5	5	6
Indep Medellin	3	1	0	2	4	6	3
Dep Cali	3	0	1	2	1	3	1

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Envigado	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
Indep Santa Fe	3	2	0	1	5	4	6
At Huila	3	0	2	1	6	8	2
Once Caldas	3	0	1	2	3	5	1

ECUADOR

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

May 7: LDU Loja 2 Barcelona 0; Olmedo 1 LDU Quito 2.
May 8: Emelec 5 Dep Quevedo 1.
May 9: Dep Quito 1 Dep Cuenca 2.
May 11: Aucas 0 El Nacional 3.
May 14: LDU Quito 3 LDU Loja 1.
May 15: El Nacional 0 Olmedo 1; Dep Cuenca 0 Aucas 1; Dep Quevedo 2 Dep Quito 1; Barcelona 2 Emelec 2.
May 21: Aucas 3 Dep Quevedo 2; LDU Loja 2 El Nacional 5.
May 22: Dep Quito 4 Emelec 0; Olmedo 2 Dep Cuenca 0; Barcelona 1 LDU Quito 0.

ECUADOR – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LDU Quito	14	10	2	2	35	17	32
El Nacional	14	7	5	2	34	18	26
Aucas	14	6	3	5	18	19	21
Dep Quito	14	6	2	6	29	15	20
Barcelona	14	5	5	4	16	23	20
LDU Loja	14	5	4	5	24	29	19
Dep Cuenca	14	5	3	6	16	22	18
Olmedo	14	4	3	7	17	22	15
Emelec	14	3	4	7	19	27	13
Dep Quevedo	14	2	3	9	17	33	9

PARAGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

May 8: 12 de Octubre 0 Nacional 3; 3 de Febrero 2 Sportivo Luqueno 1; Tacuary 3 Olimpia 1.
May 9: Cerro Porteno 0 Guarani 0.
May 14: Nacional 4 General Caballero 3; Sportivo Luqueno 0 Tacuary 0.
May 15: Guarani 1 3 de Febrero 0; Olimpia 1 Libertad 1.
May 22: 3 de Febrero 1 12 de Octubre 1; Tacuary 1 Guarani 1; Cerro Porteno 1 Nacional 0.
May 25: Libertad 3 General Caballero 1.
May 28: Nacional 1 Olimpia 0; Guarani 1 Libertad 0.
May 29: Sportivo Luqueno 5 General Caballero 1; 12 de Octubre 1 Tacuary 1; Cerro Porteno 1 3 de Febrero 3.

PARAGUAY – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cerro Porteno	14	9	4	1	24	9	31
3 de Febrero	15	7	4	4	19	12	25
Nacional	15	7	2	6	18	17	23
Guarani	15	6	4	5	16	16	22
Tacuary	15	4	9	2	19	13	21
12 de Octubre	14	4	6	4	16	19	18
Libertad	14	4	4	6	17	18	16
Sp Luqueno	14	2	7	5	17	18	13
Olimpia	14	2	6	6	8	22	12
Gen Caballero	14	1	6	7	12	22	9

PERU

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

May 7: Sport Boys 2 Universidad CV 1; Melgar 2 Coronel Bolognesi 0; Universitario 1 Cienciano 0.
May 8: Sport Ancash 2 Universidad SMP 1; Sporting Cristal 2 At Universidad 0; Alianza Atletico 1 Union Huaral 1.
May 11: Universitario 1 Union Huaral 2; Alianza Atletico 5 At Universidad 1; Sporting Cristal 1 Coronel Bolognesi 2; Melgar 3 Universidad CV 2; Sport Boys 1 Universidad SMP 1; Sport Ancash 4 Alianza Lima 1.
May 15: Union Huaral 0 Cienciano 1; Alianza Lima 2 Sport Boys 1; Universidad SMP 2 Melgar 1; Universidad CV 1 Sporting Cristal 0; Coronel Bolognesi 0 Alianza Atletico 0; At Universidad 1 Universitario 1.

PERU – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Universitario	12	7	4	1	17	7	25
Cienciano	12	8	1	3	16	12	25
Alianza Lima	12	4	6	2	25	17	18
Sporting Cristal	12	5	3	4	16	12	18
Sport Ancash	12	5	3	4	15	12	18
Union Huaral	12	4	4	4	16	15	16
Melgar	12	4	4	4	15	15	16
At Universidad	12	4	4	4	12	16	16
Sport Boys	12	4	3	5	13	18	15
Univ CV	12	2	5	5	15	19	11
Univ SMP	12	2	4	6	10	14	10
Alianza Atletico	12	1	7	4	15	22	10
C Bolognesi	12	1	6	5	9	15	9

URUGUAY

TRANSITIONAL TOURNAMENT

May 11: Wanderers 1 Nacional 2; Cerro 0 Liverpool 1; Rocha 0 Tacuarembo 0; Cerrito 4 Rampla Juniors 2; Penarol 1 Plaza 0; Rentistas 0 Defensor 0; Fenix 1 Paysandu 2; Dep Colonia 1 Miramar Misiones 2.
May 14: Nacional 1 Paysandu 0; Rocha 2 Defensor 3; Miramar Misiones 3 Rampla Juniors 1.
May 15: Liverpool 1 Penarol 3; River Plate 5 Fenix 1; Wanderers 2 Cerrito 1; Cerro 2 Plaza 0; Danubio 2 Dep Colonia 0; Rentistas 1 Tacuarembo 1.
May 18: River Plate 0 Danubio 2.
May 21: Nacional 1 Cerro 0; Liverpool 2 Rentistas 0; Tacuarembo 0 Fenix 1.
May 22: River Plate 0 Penarol 1; Rocha 2 Cerrito 1; Miramar Misiones 1 Wanderers 2; Danubio 0 Defensor 2; Rampla Juniors 1 Paysandu 0; Plaza 2 Dep Colonia 0.
May 24: Nacional 1 Liverpool 1.
May 25: River Plate 3 Cerro 1; Wanderers 2 Rocha 2; Penarol 2 Danubio 1; Tacuarembo 1 Cerrito 1; Rampla Juniors 0 Fenix 0; Miramar Misiones 1 Plaza 2; Defensor 4 Paysandu 1; Rentistas 4 Dep Colonia 0.
May 28: Danubio 1 Rocha 0; Paysandu 2 Wanderers 2.
May 29: Liverpool 0 Cerrito 1; Tacuarembo 3 River Plate 1; Rampla Juniors 1 Rentistas 4; Plaza 0 Defensor 3.
June 1: Cerro 4 Dep Colonia 2; Fenix 0 Penarol 1.

URUGUAY – TRANSITIONAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional	12	9	3	0	25	9	30
Defensor	13	8	5	0	28	12	29
Penarol	13	8	4	1	21	13	28
Danubio	13	7	2	4	19	12	23
Liverpool	13	7	2	4	20	14	23
Rocha	13	5	5	3	17	15	20
Fenix	13	5	4	4	17	17	19
Wanderers	13	5	4	4	25	27	19
Rentistas	13	4	6	3	26	20	18
Cerrito	13	5	3	5	18	15	18
River Plate	13	5	2	6	22	21	17
M Misiones	12	5	1	6	22	21	16
Tacuarembo	13	4	4	5	13	14	16
Cerro	13	2	3	8	17	25	9
Plaza	13	2	3	8	6	21	9
Paysandu	13	1	5	7	15	26	8
Rampla Jnrs	13	2	2	9	13	27	8
Dep Colonia	13	2	2	9	11	26	8

VENEZUELA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

May 8: Dep Tachira 2 Caracas 1; ItalMaracaibo 1 UA Maracaibo 2; Monagas 1 Carabobo 1; Trujillanos 1 Mineros Guayana 0; Ital-Chacao 1 Estudiantes 1.
May 15: Carabobo 2 Dep Tachira 2; Caracas 2 Ital-Chacao 2; Mineros Guayana 0 ItalMaracaibo 0; Estudiantes 2 Trujillanos 1; UA Maracaibo 6 Monagas 0.

VENEZUELA – CLOSING – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UA Maracaibo	18	12	3	3	30	12	39
Caracas	18	9	6	3	28	14	33
Dep Tachira	18	9	5	4	25	20	32
Estudiantes	18	6	7	5	18	19	25
Monagas	18	6	5	7	26	36	23
Mineros G'ana	18	5	6	7	22	23	21
Carabobo	18	4	9	5	21	22	21
ItalMaracaibo	18	4	5	9	19	26	17
Trujillanos	18	4	5	9	21	29	17
Ital-Chacao	18	2	7	9	20	29	13

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS CUP

Final, 2nd leg

May 11 - Olimpico Universitario stadium, Mexico City
Pumas UNAM (Mex) 2 (Del Olmo 66, Augusto 89)
Saprissa (CR) 1 (Gomez 33)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Stott (USA)
Sent off: Aleman (Saprissa) 73min
Saprissa 3-2 on agg

MEXICO

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP
Group stage

May 8: Dorados 1 Tecos UAG 0; America 5 Atlas 2; Monterrey 1 Toluca 3; Morelia 2 Atlante 1; Puebla 0 Tigres 3; Guadalajara 2 Pumas UNAM 1; Jaguares 4 Veracruz 3; Santos 2 Cruz Azul 0; Necaxa 5 Pachuca 0.

MEXICO – CLOSING – GROUP 1 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morelia	17	11	2	4	27	16	35
America	17	7	9	1	38	27	30
Tecos UAG	17	8	5	4	31	21	29
Dorados	17	7	5	5	23	19	26
Atlante	17	5	5	7	24	21	20
Pumas UNAM	17	4	2	11	19	28	14

GROUP 2 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruz Azul	17	9	4	4	36	19	31
Tigres	17	6	6	5	25	19	24
Guadalajara	17	6	5	6	29	31	23
Toluca	17	6	5	6	17	22	23
Puebla	17	4	4	9	19	29	16
Atlas	17	2	5	10	21	35	11

GROUP 3 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Necaxa	17	9	1	7	28	20	28
Santos	17	9	1	7	31	31	28
Monterrey	17	8	3	6	24	25	27
Jaguares	17	6	4	7	19	23	22
Pachuca	17	5	5	7	20	27	20
Veracruz	17	3	5	9	15	33	14

Top two from each group qualified for quarter-finals, plus the two third-placed sides with most points

TOP GOALSCORERS*
15 Matias Vuoso (Santos)
12 Omar Bravo (Guadalajara)
12 Kleber Pereira (America)
**Group stage only*

Quarter-finals, 1st legs

May 11: Tigres 3 Morelia 2; Monterrey 0 Cruz Azul 0.
May 12: Santos 2 America 2; Necaxa 0 Tecos UAG 2.

Quarter-finals, 2nd legs

May 14: Cruz Azul 3 Monterrey 3 *Agg 3-3. Cruz Azul on better season record*; Morelia 2 Tigres 1 *Agg 4-4. Morelia on better season record.*
May 15: Tecos UAG 2 Necaxa 1 *Tecos UAG 4-1 on agg*; America 1 Santos 1 *Agg 3-3. America on better season record.*

Semi-finals, 1st legs

May 18: Tecos UAG 1 Morelia 0.
May 19: America 3 Cruz Azul 1.

Semi-finals, 2nd legs

May 21: Morelia 1 Tecos UAG 1
Tecos UAG 2-1 on agg.
May 22: Cruz Azul 1 America 3
America 6-2 on agg.

Final, 1st leg

May 26 - 3 de Marzo stadium, Zapopan
Tecos UAG 1 (Colotto 59)
America 1 (Blanco pen 87)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** M A Rodriguez
Sent off: Marcon (Tecos UAG) 90min

Final, 2nd leg

May 29 - Aztec stadium, Mexico City
America 6 (Padilla 2, 38, Lopez 5, 90, Blanco 63, Mendoza 68)
Tecos UAG 3 (Lillingston 22, Morales 60, Davino 87)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Alcala
America 7-4 on agg

UNITED STATES

May 7: Chivas USA 1 Real Salt Lake 0; MetroStars 0 San Jose Earthquakes 1; New England Revolution 2 Chicago Fire 0; DC United 3 Columbus Crew 1; Kansas City Wizards 3 FC Dallas 3.
May 8: Los Angeles Galaxy 3 Colorado Rapids 2.
May 14: Real Salt Lake 2 Los Angeles Galaxy 1; New England Revolution 1 DC United 0; Columbus Crew 0 Kansas City Wizards 4; Chicago Fire 0 MetroStars 3; Colorado Rapids 2 Chivas USA 1; San Jose Earthquakes 0 FC Dallas 0.
May 18: FC Dallas 2 Colorado Rapids 1; Real Salt Lake 2 Chivas USA 0.
May 21: MetroStars 2 New England Revolution 2; DC United 3 Kansas City Wizards 2; Columbus Crew 2 Real Salt Lake 0; Chicago Fire 2 Colorado Rapids 1; Los Angeles Galaxy 2 San Jose Earthquakes 1.

May 22: Chivas USA 2 FC Dallas 5.
May 25: Kansas City Wizards 1 MetroStars 0; Colorado Rapids 0 San Jose Earthquakes 1; Los Angeles Galaxy 0 Columbus Crew 0.
May 28: Real Salt Lake 0 Chicago Fire 3; Chivas USA 0 Los Angeles Galaxy 2; New England Revolution 0 Colorado Rapids 0; DC United 0 FC Dallas 2; Columbus Crew 0 MetroStars 3; Kansas City Wizards 1 San Jose Earthquakes 0.
May 31: MetroStars 2 Chicago Fire 1.
June 1: Chivas USA 1 Kansas City Wizards 1.

USA – EASTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New England	9	6	3	0	18	7	21
Kansas City	10	4	4	2	19	14	16
Chicago Fire	11	5	1	5	13	15	16
MetroStars	10	4	3	3	15	9	15
DC United	9	3	2	4	12	12	11
Columbus	10	3	1	6	7	17	10

WESTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Dallas	10	6	3	1	20	10	21
LA Galaxy	9	6	1	2	16	10	19
San Jose	10	3	4	3	14	14	13
Real Salt Lake	10	3	2	5	8	15	11
Colorado	11	2	2	7	11	16	8
Chivas USA	11	1	2	8	10	24	5

LEADING GOALSCORERS
7 Carlos Ruiz (FC Dallas)
6 Taylor Twellman (New England Revolution)

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group stage draw

Group A
Al Ahly (Egy)
Raja Casablanca (Mor)
Ajax Cape Town (SAf)
Enyimba (Nig)

Group B
ASEC Abidjan (IvC)
Zamalek (Egy)
Etoile Sahel (Tun)
Esperance (Tun)

1st matchday - June 24/25/26
Round-robin format (six group games)

AFRICAN CONFEDERATION CUP

Intermediate rnd, 1st legs

Champions League 2nd rnd losers entered at this stage

May 6: USM Alger (Alg) 1 AS Marsa (Tun) 1.
May 7: FAR Rabat (Mor) 1 Enugu Rangers (Nig) 0; Red Arrows (Zam) 1 King Faisal Babes (Gha) 1.
May 8: Africa Sports (IvC) 0 Al Mokawloon (Egy) 0; AS Aviacao (Ang) 1 FC 105 Libreville (Gab) 1; Dolphin (Nig) 4 SuperSport United (SAf) 1; Fello Star Labe (Gui) 1 Bamboutos Mbouda (Cam) 0.

Kaizer Chiefs (SAf) v Ismaili (Egy) – Kaizer Chiefs withdrew; Ismaili walkover

Intermediate rnd, 2nd legs

May 21: Al Mokawloon 3 Africa Sports 0 *Al Mokawloon 3-0 on agg*; AS Marsa 1 USM Alger 1 *Agg 2-2. AS Marsa 5-4 on pens*; FC 105 Libreville 2 AS Aviacao 1 *FC 105 Libreville 3-2 on agg*; SuperSport United 2 Dolphin 2 *Dolphin 6-3 on agg.*
May 22: Bamboutos Mbouda 0 Fello Star Labe 3 *Fello Star Labe 4-0 on agg*; King Faisal Babes 3 Red Arrows 2 *King Faisal Babes 4-3 on agg.*
May 23: Enugu Rangers 2 FAR Rabat 1 *Agg 2-2. FAR Rabat on away goals.*

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
May 10: Al Shorta (Irq) 0 Al Salmia (Kuw) 1.
May 11: Al Rayyan (Qat) 1 Paas (Irn) 2.
May 25: Paas 1 Al Shorta 0; Al Salmia 2 Al Rayyan 0.

GROUP A – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paas	6	5	1	0	12	4	16
Al Salmia	6	3	0	3	8	9	9
Al Rayyan	6	2	1	3	6	7	7
Al Shorta	6	0	2	4	2	8	2

Group B
May 11: Al Wahda (Syr) 2 Al Ain (UAE) 3; Sepahan (Irn) 1 Al Shabab (Sau) 0.
May 25: Al Ain 3 Sepahan 2; Al Shabab 3 Al Wahda 1.

GROUP B – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ain	6	4	1	1	13	6	13
Sepahan	6	3	2	1	10	6	11
Al Shabab	6	3	1	2	7	7	10
Al Wahda	6	0	0	6	5	16	0

Group C
May 11: Al Kuwait (Kuw) 1 Neftchi (Uzb) 0; Al Ahli (UAE) 2 Al Sadd (Qat) 1.
May 25: Neftchi 3 Al Ahli 0 (awarded – Al Ahli did not show); Al Sadd 1 Al Kuwait 0.

GROUP C – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Sadd	6	4	0	2	8	6	12
Neftchi	6	3	0	3	8	7	9
Al Kuwait	6	2	1	3	5	6	7
Al Ahli	6	2	1	3	8	10	7

Group D
May 11: Al Ahli (Sau) 5 Al Zawra'a (Irq) 1; Pakhtakor (Uzb) 4 Al Jaish (Syr) 1.
May 24: Al Zawra'a 1 Pakhtakor 0.
May 25: Al Jaish 0 Al Ahli 4.

GROUP D – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahli	6	5	0	1	18	5	15
Pakhtakor	6	3	0	3	9	8	9
Al Zawra'a	6	2	1	3	6	13	7
Al Jaish	6	1	1	4	7	14	4

Group E
May 11: Jubilo Iwata (Jap) 3 Shenzhen Jianlibao (Chn) 0; Suwon Bluewings (SKo) 6 Hoang Anh Gia Lai (Vie) 0.
May 25: Shenzhen Jianlibao 1 Suwon Bluewings 0; Hoang Anh Gia Lai 0 Jubilo Iwata 1.

GROUP E – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shenzhen	6	4	1	1	9	3	13
Suwon	6	4	1	1	14	3	13
Jubilo Iwata	6	3	0	3	11	4	9
Hoang Anh GL	6	0	0	6	1	25	0

Group F
May 11: PSM Makassar (Ins) 2 BEC Tero Sasana (Tha) 2; Shandong Luneng (Chn) 2 Yokohama F Marinos (Jap) 1.
May 25: BEC Tero Sasana 0 Shandong Luneng 4; Yokohama F Marinos 3 PSM Makassar 0.

GROUP F – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shandong	6	6	0	0	15	2	18
Yokohama FM	6	4	0	2	10	4	12
PSM	6	1	1	4	4	14	4
BEC Tero S'na	6	0	1	5	3	12	1

Group G
May 11: Binh Dinh (Vie) 0 Busan I'Park (SKo) 4; Krung Thai Bank (Tha) 1 Persebaya Surabaya (Ins) 0.
May 25: Busan I'Park 4 Krung Thai Bank 0; Persebaya Surabaya 1 Binh Dinh 0.

GROUP G – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Busan I'Park	6	6	0	0	25	0	18
Krung Thai Bank	6	3	0	3	5	9	9
Persebaya	6	1	1	4	2	10	4
Binh Dinh	6	1	1	4	2	15	4

Group winners qualified for quarter-finals (to be played in September)
Bye to quarter-finals: Al Ittihad (Sau; defending champions)

AFC CUP

Group A
May 11: Nebitchi (Tkm) 3 Al Faisaly (Jor) 3; Muktijoddha (Ban) 0 East Bengal (Ind) 1.
May 25: East Bengal 3 Nebitchi 2; Al Faisaly 2 Muktijoddha 1.

GROUP A – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Faisaly	6	4	2	0	15	5	14
Nebitchi	6	2	2	2	11	11	8
East Bengal	6	2	1	3	6	11	7
Muktijoddha	6	1	1	4	3	8	4

Group B
May 11: Dempo (Ind) 0 Al Ahed (Leb) 1.
May 25: Al Ahed 4 Al Hussein (Jor) 2.

GROUP B – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hussein	4	3	0	1	11	4	9
Al Ahed	4	3	0	1	6	6	9
Dempo	4	0	0	4	0	7	0

Group C
May 11: Nisa (Tkm) 0 Brothers Union (Ban) 0.
May 25: Brothers Union 0 Al Nijmeh (Leb) 2.

GROUP C – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Nijmeh	4	4	0	0	8	1	12
Nisa	4	0	2	2	1	3	2
Brothers Union	4	0	2	2	2	7	2

Group D
May 11: Valencia (Mdv) 1 Sun Hei (HK) 1; Tampines Rovers (Sin) 4 Perak (Mly) 2.
May 25: Sun Hei 1 Tampines Rovers 1; Perak 1 Valencia 2.

GROUP D – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sun Hei	6	3	3	0	12	5	12
Tampines Rvrs	6	3	2	1	12	6	11
Valencia	6	1	2	3	5	14	5
Perak	6	1	1	4	7	11	4

Group E
May 11: Happy Valley (HK) 0 New Radiant (Mdv) 2; Pahang (Mly) 3 Home United (Sin) 3.
May 25: New Radiant 1 Pahang 1; Home United 5 Happy Valley 0.

GROUP E – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Home United	6	4	1	1	13	5	13
New Radiant	6	3	1	2	6	4	10
Pahang	6	2	3	1	10	8	9
Happy Valley	6	0	1	5	2	14	1

Group winners and the three best runners-up (Al Ahed, Tampines Rovers & New Radiant) qualified for quarter-finals (to be played in September)

JAPAN

May 8: Urawa Reds 0 JEF United 0; Gamba Osaka 3 Nagoya Grampus Eight 1; Oita Trinita 1 Kawasaki Frontale 0; Kashima Antlers 2 Tokyo Verdy 1969 1; Kashiwa Reysol 0 Albirex Niigata 0; FC Tokyo 3 Omiya Ardija 3; Shimizu S-Pulse 1 Cerezo Osaka 1; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 0 Yokohama F Marinos 1; Vissel Kobe 0 Jubilo Iwata 0.
May 14: Omiya Ardija 0 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1; Tokyo Verdy 1969 1 Kashiwa Reysol 0; Kawasaki Frontale 0 Shimizu S-Pulse 1; Albirex Niigata 2 Kashima Antlers 2; Cerezo Osaka 2 Gamba Osaka 4; Nagoya Grampus Eight 0 Vissel Kobe 2; JEF United 2 FC Tokyo 1.
May 15: Jubilo Iwata 2 Oita Trinita 1; Yokohama F Marinos 0 Urawa Reds 1.

JAPAN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kashima Antlers	12	9	2	1	23	10	29
Sanfrecce H	12	5	5	2	18	8	20
Gamba Osaka	12	5	4	3	26	22	19
Grampus Eight	12	5	3	4	17	16	18
Jubilo Iwata	12	5	3	4	15	14	18
Urawa Reds	12	4	5	3	15	11	17
JEF United	12	4	5	3	22	19	17
Omiya Ardija	12	5	2	5	18	17	17
Yokohama FM	12	4	4	4	16	14	16
Shimizu S-Pulse	12	3	7	2	11	10	16
Cerezo Osaka	12	4	4	4	14	16	16
Oita Trinita	12	5	1	6	14	17	16
K'saki Frontale	12	4	2	6	18	17	14
Tokyo Verdy	12	3	5	4	17	20	14
Albirex Niigata	12	3	5	4	13	23	14
FC Tokyo	12	3	2	7	15	20	11
Kashiwa Reysol	12	2	4	6	9	17	10
Vissel Kobe	12	2	3	7	11	21	9

SOUTH KOREA

First stage

May 15: Daejeon 1 Suwon 1; Gwangju 0 Bucheon 1; Ulsan 1 Seoul 0; Incheon 1 Pohang 0; Songnam 1 Chonbuk 0; Chunnam 4 Daegu 1.
May 18: Chonbuk 0 Pohang 2; Bucheon 0 Chunnam 0; Daegu 0 Daejeon 0; Incheon 1 Ulsan 0; Seoul 3 Gwangju 5.
May 22: Gwangju 2 Incheon 3; Busan 2 Daegu 1; Chunnam 1 Seoul 3; Pohang 2 Songnam 1; Daejeon 1 Bucheon 0; Ulsan 1 Chonbuk 0.
May 29: Songnam 1 Ulsan 2; Bucheon 1 Busan 2; Daegu 4 Suwon 3; Chonbuk 1 Gwangju 1; Seoul 2 Daejeon 2.

SOUTH KOREA – FIRST STAGE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Incheon	3	3	0	0	5	2	9
Ulsan	4	3	0	1	4	2	9
Busan	2	2	0	0	4	2	6
Pohang	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
Daejeon	4	1	3	0	4	3	6
Chunnam	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
Gwangju	4	1	1	2	8	8	4
Seoul	4	1	1	2	8	9	4
Bucheon	4	1	1	2	2	3	4
Daegu	4	1	1	2	6	9	4
Songnam	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Suwon	2	0	1	1	4	5	1
Chonbuk	4	0	1	3	1	5	1

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Football films

FOOTBALL HAS BEEN a recurring theme in French movies. In 1979, *Coup de Tete* (Header) told the tale of a young misfit in a northern town who after serving time for a rape he did not commit returns home to find glory as a striker for the local Second Division team, scoring goal upon goal as they embark on a Cup run. The film featured the players of Auxerre, and within months the club went on a Cup run of their own, reaching the 1979 French Cup Final.

A Mort l'Arbitre (Death to the Referee) (1984) was a popular black comedy in which a gang of disgruntled fans track down a ref whom they blame for their club's defeat, while *Trois Zeros* (Three Nobodies) (2002) worked well as a satire on football as big business. The film, which recounted how Paris Saint-Germain were conned into buying 'the next big thing' from Hungary, who, in reality, was an ex-jail bird of limited ability, offered supporting roles to Ronaldinho, Jay-Jay Okocha and PSG coach Luis Fernandez.

The storyline of the comedy *Didier* (1997) takes some beating. While looking after a friend's labrador, a disaster-prone football agent finds the dog has metamorphosed into a human, who turns out to be a great goalkeeper. The labrador of then PSG coach Ricardo Rocha took the starring role.

One of the few German films to feature football was last year's *Das Wunder von Bern* (The Miracle of Berne), a celebration of West Germany's unexpected triumph at the 1954 World Cup finals. A box office smash, it centred around a youngster in the Ruhr who hero-worships German forward Helmut Rahn.

Celebration of '54...*Das Wunder von Bern*

'In French comedy *Didier*, a labrador metamorphoses into a human, who turns out to be a great goalkeeper'

Franz Beckenbauer has made a few incursions on to the silver screen, notably in *Libero*, a rather slow-moving affair from 1973 which sought to reveal the private face of a world superstar. During his time with New York Cosmos, 'Der Kaiser' also appeared as himself in *Little Italy*, a crime caper that sunk without trace.

Another German production, though directed by famous Dutch cineaste Wim Wenders, was *The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty*, a surreal story of a keeper who is suspended by his club for failing to save a spot-kick and then roams aimlessly around town, eventually killing a cinema usherette.

A breezy comedy called *Tifosi* (Supporters) enticed Italian film-goers to the pictures in droves in 1999. Nothing too elaborate, just a series of sketches relating to the misadventures of fans of various Serie A clubs. Diego Maradona makes a cameo appearance.

The late, great American stand-up comedian Rodney Dangerfield may have been miscast as the coach of a schoolgirl soccer team in *Ladybugs* (1992), but at least he gave us a few smart one-liners. Far more convincing was *Shaolin Soccer* (2002), an imaginative amalgam of football, kung fu and special effects from Hong Kong director Stephen Chow.

Escape to Victory (1981) should have been far better. After all, it had Michael Caine headlining, featured some of the greatest players of all time – Pele, Bobby Moore, Ossie Ardiles, plus Ipswich reserve keeper Laurie Sivell – and big-name director John Huston was calling the shots. But although the story of a football match being used as a cover for a prisoner of war break-out was not a bad device, the script and dialogue were poor and Sylvester Stallone was hopelessly miscast as a goalkeeper.

Kickin'...*Shaolin Soccer*

Scotland has been the setting for some of the most memorable football-related celluloid. Director Bill Forsyth produced a minor masterpiece in *Gregory's Girl* (1980), a delicious comedy about a schoolboy's infatuation with a football-mad teenage girl. In a much more serious vein, Peter Mullan played an ex-alcoholic managing a Sunday league team of no-hopers in Ken Loach's *My Name is Joe* (1998).

Greats, but not good...*Escape to Victory*

The Arsenal Stadium Mystery (1939) was an excellent Ealing whodunnit, with Inspector Slade (Leslie Banks) investigating the poisoning of an amateur player. The Arsenal squad of the time, including stars Eddie Hapgood, Ted Drake and Cliff Bastin, enjoyed plenty of screen time.

Arguably the most critically-acclaimed football film of recent times was *Le Ballon d'Or* (Golden Ball), the story of a young, talented Guinean boy who dreams of stardom.

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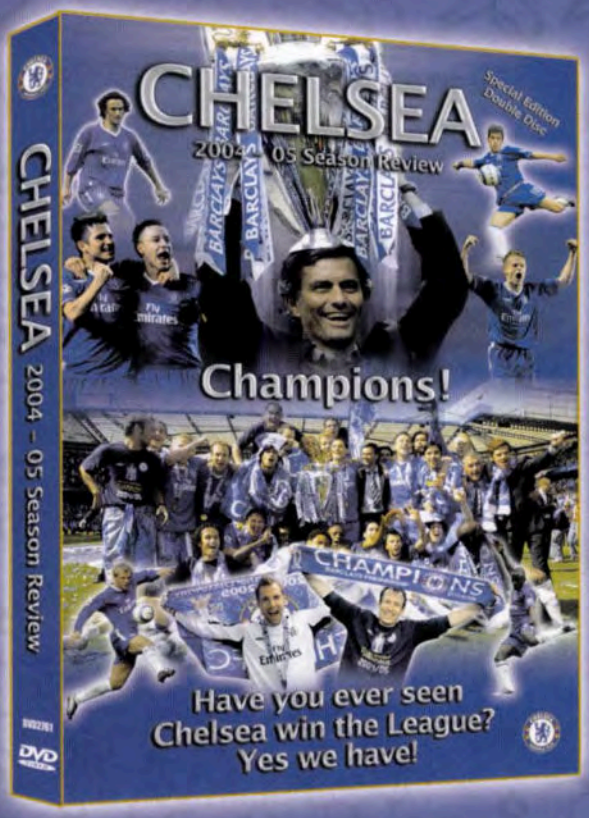

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